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HER PEOPLE'S WINDOWS





# OTHER PEOPLE'S WINDOWS.

BY

J. HAIN FRISWELL,

AUTHOR OF "A SPLENDID FORTUNE," "A DAUGHTER OF EVE," ETC., ETC.

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"The old project of a WINDOW in the bosom to render the soul of man visible, is what every honest fellow has a manifold reason to wish for."—  
POPE'S LETTERS, Dec. 12, 1718.

"Edidi quæ potui, non ut volui, sed ut me temporis angustia: coegerunt."  
—CICERO DE ORAT. Lib. iii.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

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# CONTENTS.

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## VOLUME I.

	PAGE
INTRODUCTORY.	
A WINDOW IN THE SKY . . . . .	1
CHAPTER I.	
THE WINDOW WITH THE BLIND DOWN . . . . .	13
CHAPTER II.	
THE AUTHOR'S WINDOW . . . . .	27
CHAPTER III.	
MUSIC FOR THE MILLION . . . . .	49
CHAPTER IV.	
IN THE STUDIO OF C. SCUMBLE, R.A. ( <i>in futuro</i> ) . . . . .	66

	PAGE
<b>CHAPTER V.</b>	
<b>IN THE STUDIO OF C. SCUMBLE, B.A. (<i>in futuro</i>)—</b> <i>(Continued)</i> . . . . .	71
<b>CHAPTER VI.</b>	
<b>FELIX SITS FOR HIS PORTRAIT</b> . . . . .	93
<b>CHAPTER VII.</b>	
<b>THE SEXTON'S WINDOW</b> . . . . .	107
<b>CHAPTER VIII.</b>	
<b>SOME WINDOWS IN BOW STREET</b> . . . . .	120
<b>CHAPTER IX.</b>	
<b>THE POLICE-COURT WINDOW</b> . . . . .	139
<b>CHAPTER X.</b>	
<b>IN WHICH FELIX, WITH THE READER, IS INTRO-</b> <b>DUCE TO A "PRACTICABLE" OR STAGE WIN-</b> <b>DOW</b> . . . . .	155
<b>CHAPTER XI.</b>	
<b>WHEREIN GEORGE CAREW RELATES HIS EXPERI-</b> <b>ENCE, AND DETAILS THE SUBSTANCE OF HIS</b> <b>OBSERVATIONS AT A "CHIRURGEON BARBER'S"</b>	173
<b>CHAPTER XII.</b>	
<b>AT A FARM HOUSE—CIMABUE DESCRIBES A HARVEST</b> <b>HOME IN THE MODERN ENGLISH STYLE</b> . . . . .	193

CONTENTS.

v

	PAGE
<b>CHAPTER XIII.</b>	
IN WHICH FELIX RELATES HIS EXPERIENCE OF AN INCURSION TO THE COUNTRY . . . . .	222
<b>CHAPTER XIV.</b>	
IN WHICH THE FRIENDS RESORT TO DINNER. . . . .	240
<b>CHAPTER XV.</b>	
THE DOCTOR'S STORY . . . . .	254
<b>CHAPTER XVI.</b>	
CRITICAL OPINIONS . . . . .	283
<b>CHAPTER XVII.</b>	
" AT LAST "—THE WINDOW OF A WOMAN'S HEART . . . . .	288





## P R E F A C E.

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IN his Prologue to the "Malcontent," John Marston, in a playful way, satirizes Shakspeare by making a burlesque of the Epilogue to "As You Like It." I take it that in Elizabeth's time the gallants were less gallant than they are now, and usurped the easy seats, which they *never* do now, while the ladies had to stand; for Marston makes his Prologue say, "Gentlemen, I could wish, for the women's sakes, that you had all soft cushions;" and he hopes that the "gentlewomen"—the good word was not then banished—were in comfort where they stood; but he adds, "What would they wish more but the play now? And that they shall have instantly."

A prologue is like a preface, and hence it is cited. Few people attend to it. To those who may do so, I would urge that this book presumes to call itself original, though some of the sketches have appeared before; that it is written to amuse, and to be forgotten; that, to anticipate those who like small witticisms, it will be sure to achieve one part of its aim; and finally, that it has been put together not without trouble, since each of the "Windows" has been visited and studied fairly and honestly. As I have not thrown any mud into my neighbours' casements, I hope that heavy stones and brick-bats will not be canted, along with the cant of criticism, through mine.

And now the play is about to begin. Gentle reader, let your judgment be tempered with good nature, and the author will be happy.

MAY, 1868.

# OTHER PEOPLE'S WINDOWS.

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## INTRODUCTORY.

### A WINDOW IN THE SKY.

**I**T happened, according to the learned Dr. Lemprière, who wrote in ancient days, long before the industrious William Smith had begun his never-ending but excellent compilations, or the magnanimous Anthon had determined, with Transatlantic and auctorial boldness, to plunder all the British authors he could lay finger on, that Jupiter summoned his God-council to examine a new work of his—Man.

Thus our artists at the present degenerate age—for, as we all know, all ages, when present, have been and are degenerate—summon their friends to debate, praise, criticise—but never to blame—the

↳

new picture they are about to send in to the Royal Academy Exhibition.

With all their charms, yet, as being man-created, there is something extremely earthy about the old mythologies, although not so much so that any scholar would not regret their beauties being mauled and spoiled by the ruthless burlesque-writer; but yet, in the times when Jupiter was king, and great Pan was *not* dead, they who usurped heaven, in the wild imaginings of the poet, were so near to man himself that they might have been supposed to have spoken thus:—

“An’t please your Majesty,” said Neptune, with a rough voice, as if the waves and the sea-breezes had somewhat tried his kingship, “this Man of yours is a noble work, but he will never do for the sea. With the land, now, he may succeed. He can grub up the earth with those hands of his; he can walk upon those shapely but somewhat thin legs there; but as to living at sea, in sea, or on sea, why, a cap-full of wind would blow him to nothing, and a good sou’-wester would hurry him off the face of the waters. Avast there! Æolus—what say you?”

The monarch of the winds submitted that Jupiter had made a pretty toy, but that he was somewhat

of his captain's opinion. "Captain, or Admiral Neptune, indeed, would perhaps prefer a walrus, sea-horse, a whale, or even a shark; but he, Æolus, liked the look of the man, only he was too much like a big bird with all his feathers blown off."

"Or like a forked radish," cried Pan; "evidently weak and feeble, and not particularly good-looking. Why had he not horns like a bull or a goat, to defend himself? Of course, when he came to inhabit the earth, he must fight. He knew of a lion, which all the beasts had elected king, and a good loud roar from *him* would make Man shake on the very soles of his feet. By the way, why did he have feet like the gods, and not armed and covered with good horn hoofs, like the bull's and the goat's?"

"Because," said Jupiter, "this forked radish, this bird without feathers, this animal Man, *animantium Dux et Rex*, is created for a higher destiny than that of the bulls and the goats, which he, man, should offer up on grateful altars." And the king of gods and men sniffed with wide nostrils, as if the incense already rose to the blue ether, and rolled his eyes—large, blue, kingly, and eterne—with some contempt upon Pan and his friends.

Then stepped forth another of the *Dii Majorum Gentium*, with yet another by his side. They were Mars and Vulcan. Mars, whose armour clanked as he walked on the crystal pavement of Jupiter's palace, said that Man was a brave fellow of his inches, and that he would teach him to war and to fight, and that, no doubt, in the after years, he would give some account of his prowess. "Aha!" cried he, as Man's eyes sparkled at his gestures, for as yet Man understood not the large utterance of the gods—"aha! my friend, we shall drill you into ranks, and form you into the phalanx, and marshal you into armies, and you shall do glorious deeds in battle, and worship me."

"Ay, ay," said Vulcan, with a short dry cough, as one burnt up from being at the forge, and with a live spark in his throat which all the nectar he had taken had failed thoroughly to put out—"ay, ay, Mars; I will teach him something useful. You gods here are above me; you will not soil your delicate fingers by examining the riches of the earth; but I will teach Man rare secrets. He shall know where diamonds lie—whence the fresh-lets of water spring—where the red copper, and the pure white silver, and the yellow gold lie in countless treasures; but, chief of all, I will give

him two servants—Coal and Iron ; and with these he shall tame the earth, and travel the sea, and fight and subdue all your animals, Pan, weak as he is. I like your work, Jupiter—he is the last and best ; and, by the way, while I am about it, I will just call my wife Venus to look at him : like the rest of her sex up here, she is fond of something new.”

“Last and best,” said Jupiter, with a smile ; “nor quite the last, nor quite the best. He wants a companion ; he must have a she-man about him, or, poor fellow ! he will be miserable indeed. What say you, *Regina et Conjux* ?”

“Would you speke always so wisely, Jupiter ! I, too, will gift Man, but I will wait till his partner in earth’s trials, sorrows, triumphs, and joys, such as they will be, is formed. But here is Mercury, your eloquent, expert, agile, and not over-conscientious relation. Zeus hath spoken. Mercury, give your opinion.” Upon this summons Hermes, son of Maia, sprang forward, delighted to have his say ; for, being eloquent, quick, and active-brained, the messenger of the gods had always a burning desire to deliver his opinion. He looked upon Man with pleasure, for he desired first to steal him, as he had stolen the sword of Mars, the hammer of Vulcan, and the very sceptre of Jupiter. “Oh !



Zeus," cried the god, using for the first time the Greek nomenclature, as he preferred afterwards Greek ways, and Greek trading and cheating—"you have done well. I will teach your handy-work how to speak in the senate, and puzzle his clients in the forum. In later times I will dress him in a horsehair wig, and put an absurd black toga on him, and teach him to tell lies, and make the worse appear the better reason."

"Call you these valuable gifts?" said Mars, with a sneer. "You will make him a poltroon with your lying and thieving——"

"And trading," said Mercury, with a smile—"which indeed will lead him in a roundabout way to make war; and so Vulcan will have something to employ his smithy. Neptune will find him stealing along his watery kingdom on the outside, not like the whales and the sharks; and you, Mars, will have work for Deimos and Phobos, or Terror and Fear; and your gaunt sister Erys, whom future mortals will call Strife; so that on many a battle-field—ay, even on the sea—shall Man's mimic thunders be heard. Blood shall be shed in——"

"Stop!" cried Athene, whom some call Minerva, advancing with imperial step and cold blue eyes;

## INTRODUCTORY.

“I will give Man something which shall help to keep him free from such terrible folly; and this shall be Wisdom.” She laid her cold hand on his forehead as she spoke, and Man held himself erect, and with proud aspiration in his eyes looked more godlike than before.

Next came forward Venus and the Graces, and gave Man Love; and Apollo, following closely upon the gracious Nine, promised to teach him Music, which would soothe, and Poetry, which would raise and elevate him, and make him sing worthily the deeds of the gods, and the noble doings of good men. And the teachings of the Sun-god, together with his promises, being expressed in a language which Man understood—for poetry is as universal as it is beautiful—so inspired him that he looked more noble than before; and the goddesses, more generous than the gods, crowded round him, and told Jove that his work was well-nigh perfect, and that if Man could only beg of the Heaven King perpetual youth, he would be beautiful for ever. But the king of gods shook his ambrosial curls, and denied the gift; and the hopeful eyes of Man were somewhat dimmed, even in youth, with the forthcoming, ever-present shadow of death.

The praises of the goddesses set down all cavillers, and the council pronounced Jupiter's great work, Man, to be good, with one mocking exception : Momus—a kind of half-god—a fatherless god, indeed—the son of Night, a carping critic of the worst sort, content to find fault and never to *do*. “I know all about it,” he said—he had just been trying to find fault with Venus, but she was too beautiful; so he descended even to her golden sandals for abuse, and said that they made too much noise for the eternal quiet of the dwellings of the gods—“I know all about it; Jupiter did not make this Man wholly; it was Vulcan who formed him out of clay, and Jupiter, who animated him, and gave him a soul, about which the poor fellow will dispute half his weary existence. Well, the creature's shaped well enough; but nothing is perfect; even Minerva's house, which was handsome externally and internally, was not made moveable.” Here Athene, the blue-eyed, looked upon the critic with a calm contempt. “Aha!” said Momus, seeing, even in that contempt, a triumph, “it is well. And this Man—let us examine him; the head and chest imperial, the port right royal, the arms muscular, the hands shapely and useful, but——”

For a moment the mocker stood dispirited, and, rubbing an obstinate and very prominent chin, confessed that Man was a fine work indeed—a very fine work. Here, again, he stopped, somewhat puzzled.

“But what? O Son of Night!” said the indignant maker; “where’s he imperfect?”

“Where does he think?” asked Momus.

“In his brain,” said Jove; “whence, in my case, Minerva the Wise sprang forth.”

“Umph!” grunted Momus; “and where does he feel?—where does he store up his hatred, or treasure his love? I see he has eyes; they will be some indication of what is passing in his brain.”

“He feels in his heart. What then?” said the king-god.

“O Jupiter, and how dull you are! Did not Neptune make a bull so stupidly, that when he wishes to toss anybody on his horns, he is obliged to hold down his head, so that he cannot see whom he attacks? and have you not done just as foolish a thing? Here you have given him a heart for love and hatred, two important feelings, especially hatred; and by all that is beautiful, you have forgotten to put a WINDOW in that breast, so that his feelings may be discovered. Verily, even the

King of Gods is not wise. What shall we say, then, O Jupiter? Shall we not cut a window in Man's breast, so that we may see the workings of his heart, and that we may make it impossible for him to do wrong; for when he feels wrong, his fellows, seeing the tumult in his breast, shall cry out, as did afterwards Menander, 'Ὁ γὰρ Θεὸς βλέπει σε—Lo! the God beholds thee!"

Here the speech of Momus was cut short, for, as the story says, the whole council broke into derisive laughter, and Jupiter was so incensed at the mocker that he turned him out of Olympus.

Happily, with us, the old fables, beautiful in their wisdom, sweet in their hidden teachings, have long been overgrown by a purer, holier, nobler Faith. Pan is dead! so Plutarch tells, in his *De Oraculorum Defectu*. There is a tradition that, at the hour of the Saviour's agony, a great cry of "Pan is dead!" swept across the waves in the hearing of certain mariners; and from that time the old oracles ceased. God had indeed re-assumed the reins of his power, and, writes Elizabeth Barrett Browning, our greatest poetess, "The vain, false gods of Hellas are silent evermore;" yet she still adjures them:

By your beauty, which confesses  
 Some chief Beauty conquering you,—  
 By *our* grand heroic guesses,  
 Through your falsehood at the True,—  
 He will weep *not* . . . ! earth shall roll  
 Heir to each God's aureole—

And Pan is dead.

Earth outgrows the mystic fancies  
 Sung beside her in her youth,  
 And those *débonnaire* romances  
 Sound but dull beside the truth.

\* \* \* \* \*

CHRIST hath sent us down the angels,  
 And the whole earth and the skies  
 Are illumed by altar-candles  
 Lit for blessed mysteries.  
 Let us hold in Christian duty  
*Truest Truth the fairest Beauty!*

Pan, Pan is dead.

But this fancy of Momus remains, and many of the wild stories of the gods and goddesses still linger, teaching us, in their way, beauty and love. And so it happens that the writer wishes to take advantage of that critical, carping, rascally fellow's suggestion, and to take the reader with him to peep into OTHER PEOPLE'S WINDOWS! What shall we not see then; as we look into the hearts of men, into their houses, into their ways and manners, all over this wide country and huge city?

Something truly which will touch, amuse, or improve us, no doubt. As we walk out early in the morning down pleasant Oxford Street, turning to the west, or returning eastward, when the sun lights up the healthy faces of city clerks, and the bright looks of the little work-girls who are going cheerfully to their duty, trusting, let us hope, in God's protection, and having humbly begged for their daily bread, earned by their daily toil; when the sun lights these happy faces up, and not only those, but the care-beset brows of early city gentlemen, on whom the chain of gold coins hangs somewhat heavily—there is some pleasure for the thoughtful man to see the neatness with which Messrs. Smith's, Brown's, Robinson's, Jonson's, Jones', and Green's young men are dressing their respective windows. Shall we take a walk or so, reader, and peep into these windows in the day-time, or the evening-time, or in the middle watches of the night? Truly, Momus had some scintillation of wit and judgment in his cynical proposal. Much may be learnt even from our furtive but observant glances into Other People's Windows.

CHAPTER I.

THE WINDOW WITH THE BLIND DOWN.

**T**HERE is a window with "the blind down" over the way in our street, and for some time the maid-servants have been divided in their opinion as to whether a rich old gentleman has just died, or a poor young gentleman has just been born. There is considerable mystery about both operations; one the gate of death, the other that of life, the entrance and the exit of the poor player who will fret his hour upon the stage, and then will be seen no more. Lord Bacon thinks one operation just as troublesome to the subject as the other. Both are mysteries, hardly to be solved by the gossips of the street; but, one of them having already been undergone, and long forgotten by us, and the other being at a wide distance from all of us, as we think, we now and then talk about them.

The mystery of the drawn blind was not long in



being solved, notwithstanding the different and opposing accounts very circumstantially delivered by the milkman and the greengrocer's boy, the first of whom inclined to the end, and the other to the beginning of the long journey. A cart-and-horse, conveying a quantity of tan, which was neatly spread in the street roadway before the house, solved the question. It was a birth after all, and not a death, as any one might have foretold had he looked at the other windows, and at the white kid glove, which had before figured at some pleasant party, perhaps, with which, with an old-fashioned tenderness, the knocker had been muffled.

Our opposite neighbours are Mr. and Mrs. Felix Straightways, a young married couple, who have been bold enough to face the world on less than the proverbial three hundred a year, and who have been hitherto very happy; and the day has now come which no novelist cares to describe, ending his tale, cunning fellow, just as the lover is accepted, or the bride, blushing amidst her orange-blossoms, is given away at the altar.

There came a time when the window of the room in which Felix Straightways and his bride slept was darkened in the daytime with a blind,

through which at night-time the solitary light shone, calmly, quietly, and steadfastly; but not more calmly or steadfastly than the love in the heart of Felix, which made him look up to that window and think on, and muse over, as well as pray for those within.

The first time that the light burnt the long night through, Felix, who was nervous in the extreme during the whole evening, sat down in the dining-room with the doctor. How pale he turned when the latter was called away; how he knelt and prayed, yet scarcely so much prayed as that he formed fervent wishes when he was alone; how he listened to the stealthy tread of the nurse above; and how his ear, acutely sensible, made him fancy it distinguished some cry of pain! Then he would start up, and be struck with the reflection of his own pale face in the glass, and would mark the lines of care and anxiety which seemed in their intensity to have worn themselves already in his cheek.

At last, he heard the first sharp cry of his child, and knelt down, pressing his forehead on his hands, and praying with his whole heart for the welfare of the little being of which he was the father.

The truth is—which, being plainly enough told,

the reader has, with his usual acuteness, guessed already—the truth is, Mrs. Straightways had, in fulfilling that mission which young ladies who enter convents eschew, presented her husband with a son and heir, and that the receiver of this gift was going through that strange feeling which all family men at one period of their lives experience, and the best men perhaps the most acutely.

The faint, shrill little cries were now hushed, the trampling overhead increased, and in a few moments Mr. Spatula entered the room and congratulated Felix upon being the father of “a fine boy,” and detained him from rushing at once to his wife.

“But Lotty! dear Lotty!” he said—for the feeling of paternity was so strange that it found at present no resting-place in his breast—“but dear Lotty! how did she go through it?”

“Bless you!” answered the doctor, “as they all do—like a heroine. Ah, sir, it’s woman’s province to suffer pain; they beat us there. She had a capital time of it. But now sit down and make me a glass of grog. I shall stay here some little time; the nurse will come and tell you when you may see Mrs. Straightways.”

Felix, with an intense feeling of relief, does as

the good-humoured doctor bids him, and makes also a glass for himself; but he cannot drink it—he is nervous and excited. He scarcely knows what to do; but he joins in the conversation with an absent air, till Mrs. Chitterling rings the bell, and the servant enters with the message that “Nurse sends her compliments, and please, sir, you may come and see the baby.”

What author is there amongst us who shall rightly describe the feelings of one who, for the first time in his life, beholds his child? What memory is there so acute that it shall jot down every thick-thronging fancy, and note every impulse? or what brain is there so cool that it shall count and analyse each pulsation of the heart? One cannot describe the indescribable. We are, at best, but weak creatures; some joys which we experience are too astounding—some griefs too sharp; they go beyond the measure of humanity, and of them time bears little record—save where, perhaps, a deadening blank occurs.

So we will let that pass, and watch Felix as he sits by the side of his wife, who holds, for the first time in her life, a little helpless thing, about to draw its life from her own bosom.

Warm and gently breathing, with a little cap

of the finest muslin pressing round its silky hair, and indenting even those soft plaits into its softer flesh, lies the little one upon its mother's arm. And, as the father bends his head to gently touch it with his lips, to look upon it as a new wonder, the mother raises her eyes to his; and when they meet, husband and wife thank God for the new bond of affection which has grown up between them. The long silken lashes of the young wife are wet with a new emotion—the deep gaze of Felix full of a more softened love than ever yet beamed from it.

All things considered, therefore, when Lotty, as she did immediately, fell asleep, clasping the little baby, and with the hand of Felix softly held within her own—fell asleep, I say, with a heart so full of calm, holy happiness—of comfort, relief, of peace, and joy, such as she had never felt before—it was hard that Mrs. Chitterling, the nurse, should turn him incontinently out of the room. “It was a great favour,” she said, “to let him come in at all; some gentlemen never saw their ladies at such times; and so, sir, you must go.”

“Yes, but, nurse,” said Felix, miserable at being ejected, “husbands see their *wives*, surely?”

It was all one to Mrs. Chitterling. The flattery

dealt out by people of her class, in dropping the good old name of wife, and in substituting that of "lady," which some people imitate in the reported marriages in the papers, Felix had attempted to satirise; but the satire fell harmless upon the ample folds which Mrs. Chitterling wrapped round her. The gentleman was therefore turned out, and Mrs. Chitterling, establishing herself in a huge invalid's chair, fell asleep by the side of her patient.

It was at this period, while the blinds were down, that Felix passed the most comfortless period of his existence. He was by no means unhappy; that adjective being not only too strong, but perfectly unfitted to express his feelings. He was comfortless.

Mrs. Chitterling reigned supreme. It was she who prepared for him his breakfast, his solitary breakfast, taking charge of the keys of the mistress, and dealing out what tea she chose. It was she who, on the pretence that the servant had enough to do (and in truth she had, with Mrs. Chitterling in the house), would persist in sending him his toast, prepared by her own hands at the fire, which she would keep in all night, and which naturally got dull and sleepy in the morning.

Such toast! unhealthy yellow round the edges; but, as if to compensate for that, with a deep black patch in the centre! No wonder that he did not eat much at breakfast, and went away quite crest-fallen, when, after knocking at his wife's chamber door to bid her good morning, he was answered in a cutting whisper that the "patient" was asleep. Oh! those cutting whispers! they were sharp enough, but not more sharp than Mrs. Chitterling's sarcastic coldness and evident contempt for his ignorance babyward. The first time he attempted to hold a baby was such an egregious failure on his part, so said Mrs. Chitterling, that he never tried it again in her presence. It is but justice to say that he has since "got his hand in," to use a vernacular, but not very vulgar phrase, and that, in the opinion of Mrs. Felix, who ought to be an authority, few or none can nurse a baby so well as he.

When the blinds are down for this cause in a man's house, the selfishness of the creature comes out very prominently. He goes like Felix to his business, and works with application, for he knows that he has an additional mouth to feed; but when he comes home, then the feeling of utter wretchedness commences. Where is now the bright smile, where where the twinkling candles? where the warm, soft

hand, held out to catch his own, which would drag him indoors without giving him time to wipe his shoes? where the pert, happy tongue which would drive him out and scold him for not doing so? He used—this poor Felix—to stand shivering at the door, looking up to the blind with the faint light behind it, and think of these things.

He stood at the door, to be sure, much longer than heretofore. Dreary, inexplicably dreary, was his tea when he got it; and so lonely was the poor man that he formed a friendship with the cat, and grew amused and absorbed over the "Quarterly Review." The cat, like the husband, is a wanderer at such times; for nurses have cats of their own at home, and love not the strange animals. There was no interchange of kindly thoughts at tea, no gossip or harmless banter about acquaintances, in which Felix used to mix his salve rather strong, because he loved to hear his wife take the part of the innocent.

Helpless and reduced to a very small position in his house, looked at disdainfully as a somewhat useless appendage, even by the maid-servant, Felix would sometimes be tempted out to a friend's house or a concert; but he never failed to think himself guilty in going, nor, indeed, to hear of the



heartlessness of some men, in a playful but cutting aside from Mrs. Chitterling. At times, when his wife was vaguely said to be "improving," he would be allowed to sit and take tea in her bedroom. But the entertainment was a failure because of the jealous Chitterling, and the utter helplessness of Lotty in such hands. If the unhappy husband tried to draw that dragon out, or to ask her opinion on the baby as upon something of which, from her great experience, she was an authority, he met with cutting rebuffs on the ignorance of all his sex, except the doctor, and was sure to come to grief in some disastrous way, as a young husband, and a nobody. Talk about the equality of woman; in the chamber with the blinds down their supremacy is utterly established.

But now and then the pleasant time he spent with Lotty—who, though weakly, occasionally sat up, looking pretty and fresh in the fashionable cap in which young ladies at these periods delight to deck themselves—nearly compensated for the distraction he suffered under the heavy sway of Mrs. Chitterling, who indeed was only to be subdued by a much more heavily-armed vessel—Lotty's own mother. When that respected lady came, Felix felt as if he should fly the house.

Poor Lotty was brought to the bar of superior judgment, sat upon, and morally crushed. The baby was commiserated, and even when he slept that calm deep sleep which healthy babies, bless them! now and then indulge in, the fear and tremors of Mrs. Lotty were generally aroused by the matrons, and the young mother was supposed to be as ignorant of the management of her own child as a girl of two would be of the dressing a court doll. Weary and puzzled, Lotty would look up to Felix for relief, but gained none from his unhappy face. But when the two elder women were away, wife and husband would fall talking happily enough of that time which would shortly come, when Lotty would be quite strong, and of the walks they would then take, when the baby, a very Moloch, to whom all their comfort was now sacrificed, should be asleep; and again they would talk upon the duties which had fallen to them—duties at once so new, so grateful, and yet so strange.

Then they would gossip about the time when he should grow up, and what they should do with him: how Felix would furbish up his Latin and Greek, which of course he never did; and how the mother dreaded the vices taught at schools;

and how their baby-boy should be a pure, beautiful thing, as white as unsmirched snow, whom no sin should touch ; and how the mother should herself be taught in teaching her boy.

Alas ! the time has come and gone, but the boy is not there ; for, although Felix carried down his wife in his own strong arms with much rejoicing, it pleased God, for his own good purpose, soon to take the child ; and for hours the young wife thought and thought again of the deep mysteries of Life and Death, when she saw that life she would have given so much to save drifting slowly away from her—slowly, slowly, yet sure as death. And it was during a second illness of his wife that Felix saw again the light shine through the blind ; and recalls it again in after life, when he looks up in the long dismal street to some dimly-lighted window, and the past pain and sorrow return once more.

But all this has long past. Our young friends have other children round them now ; sorrows have touched them but to still their hearts ; advancing years have taught them that the eager joys of youth are far less precious than those calm feelings which a well-spent life enjoys in its progress to old age.

So spring comes and goes with its bright days

and gay flowers, and summer with its warmth, sunshine, and sweet birds' songs. But God exhausts not His treasures in one season of the year ; for autumn brings forth its fruits, and in winter, safely housed, we shall calmly mark the seasons we have passed, and look through hopefully unto that brighter year which will beam for all of us. Such thoughts fill the mind of Felix Straightways as, yet in the summer of his life, he remembers the troubles and trials he has passed ; and such the lesson which was taught him by the dim light shining through the blind.

## CHAPTER II.

## THE AUTHOR'S WINDOW.

**W**HILE Mrs. Chitterling established her sway in the house of Felix, and, moreover, learnt to rule him through his wife with an absolute sway, it must not be supposed that his anxiety for his wife took away all appetite for his other pleasures.

On the contrary, after worrying himself all day at the Royal Inland Sealing-wax Office, in the company of a few other young gentlemen who had, some of them, the pleasure of knowing Mrs. Felix, and some of them not, away he would hurry home, in the hope of being useful, and very speedily find with a certain sore relief that he was not so. As for dear Lotty, who had hungered all day to feast her eyes on him, when she saw his anxious face all her anxiety was banished, and she declared that she was wonderfully well, and that Mrs. Chitterling was all that could be desired. Now the nurse was by no

means "all that could be desired." She was ignorant, sleepy, foolishly officious, and dreadfully fussy. As she was never quite certain what she was about, she was exceedingly quarrelsome if questioned, and nervously anxious that everybody should suppose she knew everything. All this, Lotty, with a woman's acuteness, knew; and all this Felix saw through. And yet these little deceits, gentle hypocrisies, kindly fallacies, and exceedingly white lies, went on between husband and wife every day.

"Quite a trustworthy person, I suppose," said Felix, holding his wife's thin white hand in his, and thinking, as he looked at it, that a woman's hand never was prettier than in the sleeve of a night-dress, with the soft lace edging falling over it.

"Yes, dear; Mrs. Chatterley, who came to see me to-day, in such a love of a lace bonnet, said that I had secured a treasure."

"Umph," said Felix—"an opinion at second-hand." Then his wife pressed his hand gently, for she saw that his eye rested on the bright gold ring on the fourth finger, and that a noble fondness overspread his face.

"Umph!" repeated Lotty, archly; "oh, we

get on very well, darling. Does not it look bright now?—not a scratch on it—as good as new.”

“A thousand times better, a million times dearer; why, think what it has held, think what a symbol it is of the strong love between us.”

“Yes, dear, go on,” said Mrs. Lotty, just lifting up a corner of the coverlet and showing a soft miniature face full of sleep and happiness, but which even in its happy sleep pressed closer to its mother’s breast; “go on, there’s a good Felix.”

That was her way. She was not an eloquent woman; perhaps no woman is when she gets love made to her; for she likes love being *made* a dozen times more than the making it. So she said “go on,” and settled herself down to listen between her husband and her child, the happiest woman in the world, nestling in her home joys as does a young bird in its downy nest.

Was it to be wondered at that Felix was silent as to Mrs. Chitterling, and eloquent as to his own feelings? So, after a few moments of calm joy, a creaking is heard on the stairs, and Mrs. C., as she described herself in the third person, entered, softly at first, and then with a gush and a rustle, delicately reassuring to an invalid. Mrs. Chitter-

ling was of those who objected, as she said, to be "talked over," and who fancied that all her employer's occupation consisted in canvassing her noble self—a notion which seems to pervade persons of her class.

"Yes, my dear, I know you were expecting of me; my chicken, I would not be away from you one moment. It's my dooty, sir, all'us to be at my pet's side."

Thus the nurse, with many voluble expressions of loyal service, and with a watery smile spreading gradually over a flaccid face, would interrupt the happy communion of the young couple.

"Bother the woman!" thought Felix: "I don't half like her."

"Not for a moment," thought Lotty, recalling many a long hour of neglect in her husband's absence.

"I should like to send her away to-morrow if I could, only my wife seems so thoroughly pleased with her," muttered Felix, as he drew on his gloves.

"Ah! I wish he could stay with me; his company would do me more good than this spiteful gossiping old woman," thought Lotty. But a moment afterwards she reflected that this spiteful gossip was poor and old, had been employed



for years as a gossip, and had, no doubt, fitted her tongue to her customers. "If she goes away, what refuge has she but the workhouse?"

And so Mrs. Lotty was silent about nurse Chitterling, and that excellent lady delighted herself in believing that she could "get up her sleeve," and that Lotty was a good, simple, foolish thing, and Felix a mere soft spoon.

"Quite a spoon, I do assure you, Martha," said the nurse to her friend, "and as fond; oh, so fond. I hates men as are fond, I do. Always betokens weakness—softness in the upper story, I should say. But, lawks bless you! what should we do without fools? We live upon weaknesses, we do, Martha—don't us?"

"That we do," returned Martha, turning up her little finger in a way peculiar to washerwomen and cabmen, when the right hand has a glass in it—"That we do, Mrs. C., right you are;" and here she gave a wink as she swallowed down a glass of Sir Felix Booth's popular cordial: "weaknesses is very pleasant sometimes."

"Ah, I like a weakness that has plenty of strength in it, Martha. Lawks, I've known the insides of 'undreds of houses, and it stands to reason as I should recognise a fool when I sees him. As

for Felix, as she calls 'im—what a queer name it is, isn't un?—he's a fool, a downright fool."

The person upon whom Mrs. Chitterling was so positive about was just then debating what to do with himself, having quietly settled that, if the nurse had not been poor and old, he would have packed her off. "I think," said he to his wife, "that I shall drop in over the way."

"Oh, do," said Lotty, brightening up: "I shall know you are there; and Mr. Carew is a great favourite of mine."

So away went Felix, thinking himself a brute to feel so pleasantly about his jaunt. But, to tell the truth, with men a man friend is the one very delightful desideratum in life besides the wife; and George Carew, late of Sidney Sussex College, was a friend that anybody might have been proud of. As he sits behind that window, let us take a peep at him and his study before Felix enters.

George Carew, born of a family which might have been once noble, but had long ago been only respectable, was the son of a London solicitor, who had the pride of the family with very few of its other good qualities. Troubled with collecting a history of the house of Carew and keeping his own above his head, old Carew of Red Lion Square

lived pretty fairly as long as that square was celebrated for lawyers, and sent his son to the University, where he would have won honours if his father had there continued to keep him. But somehow, as the books and honours of the old family increased, and Carew himself increased in pride and hauteur, his clients decreased also ; the square decreased in respectability, the beadle fell into a state of dilapidation, and George Carew was taken from college and placed at the solicitor's desk, just as he would have really ornamented the family of which his father was so proud.

The same difficulty which caused old Carew to take his son away from the University, prevented him from paying for his articles, which, as George said, was rather lucky than otherwise ; for he did not mind the blue bag, nor the meanness, nor the dirty office which he swept out, but he hated the law.

“There are a confounded set of lawyers whom the world would do well to throttle,” said George, twirling his moustache with a fierce gesture ; “and the only thing I thank God for about it is, that the Gubernator was not successful. An honest lawyer—well, I won't say that exactly—but a Christian lawyer—*must* starve ; it is impossible that he should succeed.”

"It's *contra naturam*," said Bagsley the barrister, who usually put the finishing touch to his plain and easy Latin, by construing it—"it's against nature."

"Ah!" said George, with a slight sneer, "did you go as far as Eutropius when you were at school, Bagsley? that's a profound author."

"Admirable!" returned Bagsley, without a blush. "I remember reading him; as profound as Plato, as eloquent as Cicero——"

"And as simple as Bagsley," concluded George, with a laugh.

Mr. Bagsley, who, being a barrister, affected the society of men of letters, felt that George Carew was too much for him, but said nothing. Mr. Bagsley was of an aspiring nature, and, having had some money left him when he was the most prominent of the young men at Messrs. Snape and Trimming's, had entered himself at the bar, eaten his terms, and had not been long called. He was a clever good fellow, honest as the day; but, having mastered with difficulty a few Latin phrases, was only too anxious to show them off.

"Whether against nature or not—and I will not attempt to dispute with my learned brother—I must confess to an ignorant impatience of lawyers.

Laws were made, I suppose, for universal justice, not to maintain in heartless existence and terribly hardening education a set of men who, it must be confessed, all flourish the better the worse mankind is."

Mr. George Carew had finished this sentence when Felix Straightways, who came from over the way, entered the room.

"Here," said George, shaking his hands warmly, "is one of the best fellows in the world; and the best fate I can wish him is, that he may never have anything to do with you, or the merry men who are waiting with their cunning looks and their parchment faces to give you briefs."

"Poor George!" returned Bagsley, as he rose and bowed somewhat stiffly to Felix, "how you must have suffered, with a father a solicitor, an uncle a solicitor, and yourself partly educated for that humanising rôle! I declare to you, gentlemen of the jury, that it hurts my feelings to contemplate the wrongs my friend George must have suffered to entertain this lethal, that is deadly, hatred."

Having thus delivered himself, Mr. Bagsley sat down, comfortably screwing himself into an antique arm-chair, of which there were many in the study, and gazing around as he smoked his

cigar, with much complacency, for he thought that his little speech was not badly wound up.

"Bagsley's sure to succeed; practice makes perfect, and he is always addressing an ideal jury."

"But other great lawyers have done it before him," said Felix.

"Umph! yes; Bagsley thanks you with his eyes. Take a weed, Felix; I've done work for to-day, and let us smoke."

He pushed his papers and desk away from him with a sigh, and sat down under a rack of pipes, throwing himself backwards in an easy chair, and filling from a very large collection a meerschaum coloured brown in the service of its master.

Over George Carew's head was a pipe-rack carved in walnut wood, bearing on its central shield the motto, "*Man is but ashes*," which looked like, but was not, a quotation from the Rev. Erskine's "*Tobacco Moralised*;" and above George's standing desk, at which he chiefly wrote, were two mottoes drawn on heraldic scrolls by George himself. One bore the words from Sidney, which our author said every newspaper man or writer of whatever kind should take to his soul, "*Looke in thy heart and write*," and the other, which balanced it, was of more homely and less

poetical manufacture, but was no less truly useful and good; it was this: "*Don't scurril yourself.*" Many a grave publisher had laughed, and thought, "Ah! what an eccentric fish is this fellow!" as they looked on George's motto. But George was not eccentric, he was straightforward, persistent, courageous, and, on the whole, a man of genius, if a man of limited genius. He was about thirty-five, and had already won a good position in a career much more arduous and uncertain than either the bar or the church; his knowledge was multifarious, his perceptions acute, his style clear, flowing, and open, and his industry so great that he made a very fair income, and maintained his widowed sister and his own two children as a gentleman should do. In the centre of his mottoes was the old crest of the Carews, surrounded by a garter bearing the motto assumed by poor old Carew of Red Lion Square, when the prosperity of the family flared up a little, to die down as quickly as it could. This was "*Nec Pluribus Impar*"—Not unequal to many, as Bagsley construed it for the benefit of Felix.

"Poor old boy! dear old dad!" said George, looking up at the demilion and the motto; "yes, that was his, and it was true of him: he had a

heart of gold ; as good a man, I take it, considering his surroundings, as ever trod between earth's floor and heaven's ceiling. But, Felix, you see I am not so ambitious ; there is my motto ; good English :

‘Patience and Faith.’

I mean to have a clock made with a line round it—a grand line, though it is my own :

*‘Patience and Faith alone can conquer Time.’*”

George spoke with full appreciation of his own work ; but then he was a man who knew what was good, and was irritated by a somewhat long course of neglect or spite on the part of the critics.

“Capital !” said Bagsley ; “I see it at once. Time, an old cove, has dropped his sceptre, and Patience, a demure lady, is urging on Faith, a beautiful but stern demoiselle, who is hitting the old cove a crack on the head with a cross.”

“Exactly,” answered George, “only the old fellow Time, a ‘pesky old crittur,’ must have a wheel, the felloes of which will form a capital place for the hours to be engraved on, and there you have the clock.”

“Hanged if I wouldn’t go and sell the design to Dent or Frodsham,” ejaculated Bagsley.



“Of course you would ; you are a barrister, and with a wig and gown on you would sell anything, even your own conscience.”

“One for you. And you sell your ideas ; you fellows sell cheap what is most dear, and ‘make yourself a motley to the view,’ as William has it somewhere.”

“Ay, did he? make *himself* a motley ! Why, if all the judges that ever adorned the bench were to stew down their solemn and grave charges, their weighty platitudes and ponderous nothings into one *consommé* of legal wisdom, the book would not equal one of the thirty-five plays of that immortal, really immortal, bard. I hate repeating generalities ; but this I must say, that Shakspeare is the immortal one, and the word well fits him.”

“The idea is not a bad one,” said Felix, “that of stewing down the charges. If judges ‘adorn the bench,’ certainly the beauty and wisdom of their solemn charges should be apparent.”

“Adorn the bench !” said Carew, with a sneer ; “now I hate that cut-and-dried flattery that we have—that newspaper flummery, in which a judge is praised because he is a judge, a general because he is a general, a parson because he is a parson. If

it were possible to corrupt and spoil God's good men, you would do it by that means. You don't distinguish true from false, good from bad, wise from stupid. You honour the place, not the man, which is just the way at once to snuff out and kill the man. England is fast becoming a nation of dull mediocrities through that accursed system."

"Dull mediocrities!" said Felix, laughing; "and yet she can produce these."

As he said this, he pointed to a shelf of Carew's book-cases, with which three sides of the room were lined from top to bottom, which contained books, most of them neither rare nor costly, but each of which was priceless to the world, and not one of which was written by a dull mediocrity. As George had not classed them by any other rule than that of an approximation of size, one need not wonder if the lot was miscellaneous.

There were there Southey's "Life of Wesley," Coleridge's "Table-Talk," his "Aids to Reflection" and "Notes Theological;" there were Butler's "Hudibras," Sterne's "Sermons," "Tristram Shandy," Ferrier's "Notes on Sterne," Bishop Berkeley's "Tracts," Milton's prose works, Grove's "Olio," Sir Walter Raleigh's "Remains," Old-

ham's "Satires," Dryden's "Miscellanies," in six volumes, Sir Thomas Browne's "Religio Medici," and a few others. Felix was quite right when he opposed these books to Carew's sweeping condemnation of dull mediocrities.

"Quite right, old fellow, quite right," said the author, proudly. "It makes one's heart beat to fancy that, amongst that little lot, your obscure book may have been slipped, eh! Ah! my boy, when old Bagsley here has risen to the bench, expounded a villainous and ignorant law, grown gouty, been quizzed by the horsehair-wigged juniors, has retired my Lord Chief Baron, and died down, those books, the very life-blood and spirit of master-minds, will be doing their good work as freshly as ever."

"'Tis a noble career," said Felix, with admiration; "and you, too, are doing good work."

"Pish!" returned the author, emitting a volume of smoke. "I have worked for A., and B., and C."—here he mentioned three of the cleverest papers in England—"but I am tired of their heartless cleverness, and I work now for the people. 'Tis a noble career; but how do we use it? Look through the whole list of papers, and mark how nobly the leaders are written; how fairly the

reviews; how the rich are reproved and the poor lifted; how utterly they are marked by an absence of clique; how expediency is never preached, and glittering nonsense and sensational stuff never, never put forward in leading articles. Here, old fellow, look in that cupboard: there's a bottle of Glenlivet, and here's a glass and some cold water; let us pour out and wash down all this; I feel rather troubled with the smoke."

Carew's study was one of those delightful places in which one can do anything he likes. Hence it was rather too much frequented as a lounge by men who gossiped away the author's time and too often rewarded him by stealing his ideas. For George, generous, impulsive, and utterly unreticent, generally blurted out that which came uppermost.

So, while Mr. Bagsley smoked or wandered from book to book, dipping into Montaigne, Suckling, Carew, Burton, or the modern novel with the author's dedicatory words written with his own hand, or her own hand, as the case might be, Felix and George talked. "And how is the dear old lady?" asked George. "I hope you told her how glad I was that it was all over."

The "dear old lady" was Mrs. Lotty; but, then, all people whom he loved were old with George.

“She’s getting on capitally, and looks prettier every day. By Jove! George, I love her more and more; I did not know that I loved her till now, when she is the mother of my child.” His honest eyes blazed up into such an illumination that George Carew caught him by the hand and shook it warmly.

“God bless you, old boy, for that sight, an honest face full of enthusiasm. Stick to that, my boy, swear by it, fight for it, die for it, but keep it for ever, that manly honest love. If ever I——”

Here the tender manly face, with its thick shade of dark hair, and its lines of thought and tenderness, grew darker, and the voice faltered and stopped. Felix saw it all: George was a widower, and something had struck upon the tender cicatrice and made the old wound bleed anew.

“Something the matter with the pipe,” he said; “here, Bagsley, give me that water-cooler; essential oil is not very nice, and the worst of a meerschaum is, that it will foul.”

The cloud passed away, but not the feeling; and Felix was as happily voluble as a woman, so that Bagsley, deep in a dictionary of Latin quotations, did not notice the interruption.

“What a happy fellow you are, George!” said Felix, “surrounded here with the literature that you love, working a good work, appreciated by all, invited out to great people’s dwellings, made a lion of, no doubt—to be invited to the duchess of this, and my lord that, and to talk brilliant repartees, as they do in “Coningsby,” or in Bulwer Lytton’s—beg pardon, Lord Lytton’s—best novels; I am sure——”

“No, you are not,” said George, with a sad smile, shaking his locks like an old lion, and taking a puff at the unoffending pipe; “no, you’re not. If the public take from Mr. Disraeli and the noble Lytton *their* ideas of an author’s life, all I can say is that my experience does not coincide with theirs. An author in England is nowhere; in France or in America he is properly acknowledged. Here the common lot of an author is that he works himself out in producing fortunes for booksellers, and a fine crop of vexation for himself.”

“Nonsense!” returned Felix; “surely you must be appreciated by thousands, and have the consolation of having aided thousands by those sound, manly articles which——”

“Hold your tongue, young one,” said George,

sternly ; " I have the consolation of having done my work ; that is all, and that is all-sufficient. I have the consolation too," he added grimly, " of having my best ideas ridiculed when they are new, and adopted when they are old ; I have the consolation of belonging to a profession which requires more brainwork, more conscientiousness, more moral *nerve* and muscle than either the church or the bar, and yet is without a position ; the further consolation of knowing that Sir John Subchick, at the head of the Home Department, will adopt my notions on young criminals, and get so bepraised by the papers that he will inevitably get a peerage ; the extra satisfaction of reading critiques, made out of my book, perverted to show the skill of the operator, and of being dismissed with a patronising kick by a boy who has not read as many chapters as you have volumes ; the still further pleasure of knowing that while the author employs publishers, printers, machinists, paper-makers, and sets going a most important branch of commerce, the butterman who buys spoilt sheets of his review or novel will sooner realise a fortune, and look down on him as he passes him on his way to court with a smile of greasy satisfaction ; nay, that while the speculator has been ruining

and corrupting, and the author ennobling and strengthening the nation, the speculator will get made lieutenant of his county, and will dine with the Queen, while the author will not even be recognised by the patrons of the "great and good," and all that bosh, as an existing being. There is one man now living, known to all the world as having caused money, pleasurable feelings, honesty, and virtue, in fact, to circulate here, in America, in Australia, France, nay, half over the globe; and where is he? It is true that he is rich by his own pen, and yet, much as he has been paid, he has not reaped a thousandth part of what he has sown. Well! the hereditary donkey of a Scotch or Bedfordshire manor has more apparent honour than this great man ever had."

"Bitter!" said Felix—"hallo! there's Bagsley going;" and certainly that gentleman, with an easy "Bye-bye," left the room, having noted a few choice sayings for his forensic speeches.

"Yes, good-bye—see you again soon," cried Carew. "Bitter! not half bitter, not half plain enough. And yet the press governs the world, and knows it, and the world knows it, and it dare not express an opinion. The cause of all this is cowardice on all sides. Of course in their hearts people do



honour us, and know all that I have said about Mr. Dickens; but to *him* the result must look even worse than I have painted it."

"But then, I suppose," said Felix, still trying to paint Carew's picture from his own standpoint, "I suppose that you have letters, and congratulations, and——"

"Letters from unknown friends? Yes," returned George, bitterly; "begging letters, from people who want your autograph and half-a-crown for a charity; others from ladies making up books of selections, who would like to reprint this poem or that chapter; others from people whose particular case you have described, and who beg you to be their soul's doctor in a case of conscience the parson don't, won't, can't indeed, possibly understand. I have to answer one such letter now. Here, you sit and smoke, and I'll do it; and just pray, young one, that God may put the right feeling in my heart, and the right words on my pen."

And away to his standing desk went the author, and wrote rapidly for a long time, while Felix surveyed the regiments of books, and thought of the long weary hours spent by George in that study. Not a book there but had been read and marked, not a paper but had been noted. There,

too, lay the last weekly Review, with George's article, acute, honest, earnest, manly, standing out like a fine healthy, flourishing tree against a background of paper lanthorns, of flippancy, false brilliancy, and grinning folly, by writers of the pert school now so prevalent.

"I'll be ready in a minute, Felix," said George; "and then we will take a turn in the streets." And away scoured his pen over the sheets of paper. "Twill console the poor fellow," said he, as he thrust the letter into an envelope; "and, egad, it has brightened me up in the effort. Here, you stay here while I wash."


A hurry and a rush; a plunging, as of a hippopotamus in a basin; a rough towelling and good hard brushing, and then George emerged, with clean collar and brilliant face, ready to go out. Felix put his arm in his and left the author's study, bidding good bye to it as an enchanted place, and muttering to himself, "Well, after all, an author, if he be a good one, is to be envied. If his—George's, that is—breast does not throb to the sense of duty nobly done, I am a nigger. Bless you, he walks like one of the lions, and is fully satisfied with himself, I know. Of course, everybody is proud of him." Felix, as they

passed out, looked up to the window with the blinds down, and, linking his arm in that of the author, said, "George, my dear boy, what are you thinking of?"

"I know what you are thinking of," said Carew; "you are thinking, young 'un, of that dear little woman up where the dim night-light shines through that blind; and I, brute that I am, am thinking just where is the best place for us to have a good song, and discuss the merits of a hot potato and a mutton chop."

## CHAPTER III.

## MUSIC FOR THE MILLION.

HE two young men—for George Carew was young in spirit, and, when free from labour, as gay as a bird—walked rapidly onwards, down a short hill, past the leafy embowerings of one or two villas, and soon reached the heart of the town, where the ways were dusty and worn, and the streets had that tired-out look and down-trodden appearance which they always assume in a crowded town towards the late part of the evening.

“Here we are,” said George, as he threw away the end of his cigar, “in the little world of London.”

“I should call it the mammoth world,” said Felix; “it is bigger than great, and exhausts superlatives. Look at the swarms of people; some hurrying home with a bright smile and

hopeful faces, others with a down-hearted look enough."

"Great world, if you like," returned Carew, linking his friend's arm in his, as they turned down Museum Street. "The satirist, who begins by despising all people, and ends by thoroughly hating himself, calls it *little*. It is little if you think of the snares, pitfalls, follies, crimes, flatteries, meannesses, masquerades, pantomimes, beads, and red Indian paint in it; great if you regard the ant-hill in clusters or in their wondrous heaps, each ant, with its microcosm of a brain, by itself."

"Here's one ant that has not a very happy life," said Felix.

He pointed to a baker, who, with his nightcap on and his face whitened, his chest exposed to the evening air, and his cadaverous appearance made somewhat more deadly and corpselike by a green light which fell on it from a doctor's round bottle in the next shop, had crept up from his bakery and was airing himself and looking at the crowd passing.

"That's not a very merry life," continued Felix. "How happy ought we to be! Consider the long-drawn and linked misery of such a man."

"He's a jolly bird, I'd lay a wager," returned

George, looking at him professionally, "and would make a very good character. He will enjoy himself here now till the bread rises, and sleep away some part of his existence on the very staff of life. Still I am bound to acknowledge that the stupidity of some few—chiefly, I think, dyspeptic people who live in hotels, and who will eat those scientifically unwholesome things called hot rolls—condemns this man and his fellows to a worse than Egyptian darkness, a far more cruel than an Israelitish slavery; that it shortens his existence, makes him pale, consumptive, drunken, stupid; that it allows him but one night's holiday in the week, and stews away all vigour of thought from him; and all this because some old dowagers prefer hot rolls of a morning. Else why should not the time of drawing the bread be five o'clock of the afternoon?"

"Why not, indeed?" said Felix.

"I never look on a baker," continued Carew, "but I think myself a guilty creature; and, egad, I never look through a confectioner's window but I believe myself back in the wildest part of the dark ages—if such ever existed."

"Well, society does frightfully oppress the poor fellows, certainly," added his friend.

“Yes; who ever heard of a baker turning out a genius? Was there ever a baker poet, eh?”

‘Night is the time to watch  
O’er ocean’s dark expanse,  
To hail the Pleiades, or catch  
The young moon’s earliest glance.’

So wrote some spooney poet. By that rule, bakers should have written wonderful things; but they never did. The fact is, we are all wrong; night may do for meditation, but the day is for work, and for that vigorous thought which precedes all work. Now we have plenty of tailors who are brave, self-reliant, and ready to fight anybody. A troop of tailor light horse, raised during a strike, and just before the Peninsular war, distinguished itself by its exceeding smartness and bravery; a set of poets have arisen from the butchers; and cobblers are notorious for the thoughtful learned men and scholars that they produce; but as for bakers, they must be relegated to the lowest rank; they produce nothing—except those idiotic confections and hot rolls.”

“I do think,” said Felix, laughing, “that, if you thoughtfully approach it, a wedding cake is the most senseless, barbaric, and abominable piece of work ever conceived, and I say this with a

tender recollection of my own modest purchase in that way."

"You are quite right, young one," returned Carew. "Now's the day and now's the hour; everything thrives with an indignation meeting. Get up one in favour of the overworked bakers, and with the purpose of abolishing wedding cakes. How monstrous the things have grown! how like a castle, a ship, a park, or a grove of trees; a heathen temple or an Indian god-house! They have become most elaborate affairs—hallo! here we are; just let us see a little life here."

Not unwilling, under sage guidance, to see how the English people enjoyed themselves, Felix entered a place which externally looked no better than a public-house, but was blessed by having at its back a very large yard, which, having been artistically covered over by a clever architect, was made into a handsome concert-room. "Look at it," said his conductor, after having entered, "and listen to the *raison d'être* of these places.

"The English people, the most quiet and sheep-like of all peoples, having only before their eyes the love of precedent, and the determination never to do anything that was not eminently conservative, had found that places whereat a few boors



assembled to sing songs were thought to be amusing. These boors, with the natural love of law which belongs to their race, had elected a chairman and had submitted themselves to his rule, and he, seated at the top of the table, was loud and authoritative, and never so happy as when he could declare 'that Mr. Smithson will oblige with a song, gentl'm'n.' Under the rule of this Tyrannos the public-house prospered, and people came from far and near to hear Mr. Smithson, until that genius and the chairman were supplied, at first gratis, and with some liberality, with grog and strong waters, and lastly were paid, as an attraction to the house and a lure to other men to come in and spend their time and money in listening to music.

"The great law of the selection of species, as laid down by that philosophic copyist of Lord Monboddo, Darwin, has done away with Smithson and the red-nosed chairman. Smithson's voice, a very sweet one, grew rough and ragged under a long course of gin-and-bitters, and the chairman was taken in hand by Death. Now others better than they have taken their place, and the free-and-easy has become a music-hall, destined, it may be, to supplant the theatres."

“Bless me !” said Felix, opening his eyes and gazing round on the assembly.

This assembly formed a very respectable body externally, and was somewhat closely packed, for the “Great Somebody” had made a very large bid for popular favour, and “the following well-known artistes” had mustered in great force to do him a service. As the “Great Somebody,” in his turn, was expected to give his time and talent to the benefit of each of the said artistes, the “Great Somebody” did not, perhaps, in the long-run, make such a good thing of his own benefit ; but the hall was crammed. The adjuration, “Come early,” had been obeyed, and, as there was yet some time to elapse before the curtain rose, Felix and his friend had space and leisure to observe the auditory, which occupied itself in cracking nuts and gossiping.

Perhaps a full half of the room was parted off for “reserved seats,” an infraction on the “rights” of the audience which a few years ago would have created a riot, but which is now submitted to in every theatre, with a perfect appreciation of the fact that the first thing a manager has to do is to make his house pay. That being conceded, the public seemed to be very glad to take up with the

worst part of the house, and to see others, who had paid more, lounge away in the more comfortable stalls.

The "stalls," covering nearly half the hall, had each of them a table before them, with pipe-lights and spittoons in close approximation, so that the habitués could enjoy music and tobacco at the same time. The chairman, a middle-aged fellow, who looked young, notwithstanding the great wear and tear that his face must have had, was clean shaven and fairly dressed, and quite up to his business. He was surrounded by certain genial spirits, who either sang themselves, or admired those who did sing. They most of them had a fresh, half-country appearance, as if the effects of good living had had a struggle with those of late hours, and had gained a victory. They were well-dressed, and fairly behaved, although there was evidently an intimacy between them and the singers, which was quite understood by our fresh and unsophisticated Felix when he saw the chairman leave his throne and station himself behind the footlights, in order to give a melancholy recitative, which we shall afterwards speak of.

"Hallo! Carew! Who would have thought of seeing you here? Oh, you naughty boy! And

who is the young fellow you have with you? Very young cousin from Oxford, eh?"

"From Oxford Street! Why, he is the father of a family, and has come with me to study character. Just my luck: sure to meet somebody I know. Well, and how is Mrs. Scumble and the two young Scumbles, Boadicea and Caractacus?"

"Cart before the horse," returned the artist, bowing politely to Felix. "My great picture of Caractacus at Rome, crying out, when he saw the gorgeous palaces——"

"Oh, yes, we know all that. See the catalogue, *passim*, for the last century. It has been up just a hundred years, you know; and you artists have never missed giving us Caractacus, Alfred, and Boadicea."

"Well, fact was," said Scumble, with a kind of blush, "the boy, the British boy following Caractacus—for I took the liberty to lump the two anecdotes—was the most beautiful little critter in the world, and when ours came Mrs. Scumble said 'twas just like him. *Non Anglus sed Angelus*—you know the patter. Well, we christened him Caractacus and the girl Boadicea, in remembrance of having sold my big picture to an art union prize-holder from the Black Country."

"These are grateful memories. Now just sit down and pull that Guy Faux slouch hat off, if you don't want to be taken for an organ-grinder."

So saying, Carew settled himself down to do as they did at Rome—that is, at the Alma singing saloon—he called for his pipe, and he called for his pot, and fiddlers three came trooping in in no time, and presently the entertainment began

"Beastly vulgar, isn't it, George, my boy?" said Scumble, drawing a delightful cloud out of his pipe and adjusting himself comfortably to his settee. "There's a little girl here that Madder Brown says I ought to paint: that's why I come."

"You humbug!" growled George, in high scorn; "why, it's infinitely better, and more elevating too, than Ranelagh, or Vauxhall, or the Marybone Gardens, where all the nobs went. Did you ever read the songs they sang then—eh? Well, I have, and they have made my bronzed old cheek blush. No, but to smoke—you say. Well, does not the Grand Turk smoke when the dancing-girls come in? Is a narghilly more virtuous than a clay? or vile Rakee any better than honest Bass or Allsopp? O those motes and beams! now listen and perpend."

To a lively tune, which had the merit of inter-

preting the words, such as they were, and with much vivacity, a young lady, in an evening dress fashionably and well made, sang a stupid song, which, being but partially applauded, the chair made a louder noise than usual, and said Miss Belville would oblige again. In a marvellously quick time up came Miss Belville with an entire change of dress, and sang a much less stupid song about a servant-of-all-work named "Sarah," in which the attempts at gentility of a young clerk and his wife, master and mistress of Sarah, were fairly satirised. The choruses, representing the continual bell-ringing and calling for Sarah, were taken up in a perfect style by the audience, and in the midst of one of these Miss Belville vanished in a torrent of applause, at the very top of which, borne faintly like the sound of a signal-gun over the roar of the waters, the chairman announced that Miss B. would oblige again.

Felix and his friends, amused in spite of themselves, had scarce time to compare notes when the young lady appeared as a page in the time of one of the Henries—at least so she said, and no one appeared to contradict her. She was as gay as a prince in a burlesque, and sang and danced capitally and with great vigour, until, out of

breath and full of excitement, she escaped again with unbounded applause, appearing a fourth time merely to bow her acknowledgments.

"That's a clever girl," said Scumble, "and a fine one too; now she'll go away to some other house and sing these songs over again, perhaps three times."

"Well, she ought to make money while the sun shines, for she is in a galloping consumption, I should say," said Felix; "perhaps, too, she is working for others."

"Yes," grumbled grim George Carew, "working for us and our friends here, to amuse us. And what is she worse, for what *we* have heard, than those great artistes who exercise their divine voices to please lords, viscounts, dukes, and the rich bankers, contractors, cheesemongers, lawyers, club-men, and rising barristers at Her Majesty's? It's only a question of degree, not of kind. The staunch old Puritan preachers swore they were all children of the devil."

"Hallo! what's here?" ejaculated Felix, as the chairman, with much the look of a mute without gloves and with no hat on, came, and, twisting his jolly face into a most unhappy expression, began singing, "Come home, father," to a plaintive and

not displeasing melody, while behind him a lime-light, projected from under the stage, threw a bright patch on the wretchedly-painted curtain, lighting up its hideousness until it was nearly unbearable by the artistic eye of Mr. Scumble. The ditty purported to be the plea of a small child to its father, to leave the public-house and to come home, for Johnny was ill and mother was waiting for him; and the recitative, solemn in rhyme and cadence, was fairly written and well given. When that finished, the curtain suddenly drew up and a thoroughly realistic tableau presented itself.

It must have been the reflection of a scene only too familiar with dozens of the audience. A sot at a public-house, with the notices of Old Tom, a Goose Club, Billiards and Pool, and many of the low enticements familiar to the eyes of such men, maundered over his pipe and pot, while a pretty sailor-boy implored him to come home, and in an alto voice took up the recitative of the chairman; then, suddenly, another scene at the back was disclosed, and the mother and child—the child sick even to dying, and the mother pale with watching—were seen sitting in a wretched room. Still the drunken father remained, and the curtain fell. A second scene followed the chairman's second



recitative, and the sick baby lay stiff and dead, laid out by the mother's hands, who knelt beside it. The picture was given with a terrible præ-Raphaelite vigour, realism, and ugliness. Anything more true it would have been impossible to see, save that the mother was cleaner than such sad mothers often are. So said Carew, who had visited many poor homes and seen the reality. A third scene followed: the brutal father endeavouring to strike the boy, but eventually coming home and falling prostrate, as the figure of the little child, in real bed-gown and false wings, rose like an angel at the back of the scene. When the curtain fell the applause was immense; wives urged their husbands to applaud, and applauded themselves; and, indeed, the audience would not rest quiet until repentant father, natty little sailor-boy, mother, and child-angel, bowed their acknowledgments before the curtain.

“Very low taste, isn't it, Scumble?” said George, satirically. “You see, these poor people are not such fools after all. They teach themselves, and submit to teaching; the man sits down to a lesson from his own life. Would fine gentlemen dare to do so at the Haymarket, or the St. James's? If a new “*Marriage à la mode*,” a new story of *demi-*

*monde* life, such as sensational novelists try to paint and never succeed in painting, were placed before the audience, what would they say? I do wish cant could be entirely banished. Here have I seen at music halls the vice of betting most vigorously exposed, satire administered to vanity, and such scenes as this only too often given. I maintain that, of true morality—for all these scenic representations have a moral end—these working men and women demand and have a thousand per cent. more than the *moral* middle class has. Why, superfine sneering and superficial smartness have got so much ahead that you eschew all plays with a moral, and have not intellectual back-bone enough to sit out Shakspeare!”

Felix applauded these sentiments so much that George blushed; and the chairman, fancying the noise proceeded from impatience, rang up the curtain and announced that the Great Bounce, or some one else equally great, would sing; and, after a stupid song, the great one gave certain impersonations of kings, potentates, and great men, which, to say the least, were some very clever and some indifferent. In the midst of a *ri-to-tum* chorus, purporting that his Majesty the Sultan “stood just so”—at which the great one

popped out dressed *à la Grand Turk*, and looked, at a distance, very like the photographic potentate—our little party left, and proceeded, not as they intended, to a tavern, but to Scumble's studio, where he assured them that his colour-grinder and general slave, a gentleman who had served her Majesty as a soldier and the regiment as batman, and a variety of artists as a model, would cook them a chop each, and boil a pot of potatoes better than any club cook in the world.

"But you've no fire," said Carew, withstanding the pressing Scumble.

"Wonderful efficacy that way in paint rags; gives a splendid taste to the chops. Come along; Belisarius will be going else."

"Who is Belisarius?" asked Felix.

"My man," said Scumble. "Splendid fellow a time ago; but good living, stout, and kind treatment have spoilt him; he is too old for Aristides and too fat for Belisarius."

This our friends found when the door was opened, and the great Roman received his master with a military salute. However, the entertainment was perfect: Felix was delighted with the snug inside of the studio, and admired Scumble's new picture which he was preparing for the Royal

Academy. "If I don't get made an Associate for that," said the artist, "there is no justice amongst English artists." Whereupon Carew, who was taking a deep draught from a pewter cup of an antique form, gravely winked at Belisarius, and sent that brave man into an incontrollable fit of laughter.

## CHAPTER IV.

IN THE STUDIO OF C. SCUMBLE, R.A. (*in futuro.*)

**W**ELL, young one," cried George Carew, to divert the attention of Scumble from his servitor's violent fit of laughter; "is not this a jolly place?"

Felix answered in the affirmative, and the reason why Carew winked so knowingly when he heard his friend Cimabue Scumble declare that if he were not made A.R.A. there was no justice, is lost to society. Perhaps it was because Belisarius and he had heard the remark before; perhaps some other artist, by whom Belisarius had been employed, had made the same remark in the hearing of the two. At any rate, the laugh ceased suddenly, and Cimabue was by no means disconcerted.

Felix looked round the studio and took notes. It was rather dusty, although Scumble's wife made predatory incursions into it, taking away Cimabue's money, which he kept in a tobacco jar,

having the room scrubbed and the pictures wiped with a damp rag, and otherwise setting the place tidy: yet, on the whole, it was a model studio; the carpet was good, the fire-place not wholly rusty and unconscious of black-lead, and the rag-shop of costumes not more than picturesquely shabby.

On a dais opposite Felix stood a beautiful creature of the most wooden description—nothing less than a lay figure, but posed with such a vigour, and with such fury in her glass eyes, that Felix shuddered as he looked at her.

“I’ll ask Carew to tell you a story about that,” said the artist. “Most wonderful old figure that; belonged originally to Hilton, R.A.”

“What’s she doing now, my boy—something classical?” asked Carew.

“Ye-e-s,” drawled the artist, as if he had not made up his mind. “Something classical, of course. I’ve been at Lemprière to-day about it; it will be either ‘*Queen Thomyris receiving the Head of Cyrus*,’ which she plunged, you will remember, in a skin bag full of blood—I shall make it a golden bowl—or, ‘*Fulvia about to pierce with a bodkin the tongue of Cicero*’—wonderful subjects, eh?”

“’Twill do,” answered the oracle. “Look at

those swords, Felix—real Andrew Ferrara that; has figured in a thousand fights on canvas. Observe those eighteenth century small-clothes; Dr. Primrose, the Vicar of Wakefield, has worn them in more than one exhibition. That armour belonged to the Black Prince in 1857, and was worn also by the Douglas when at the Suffolk Street Gallery, in 1861. That Scotch mull has been in the honoured hands of Belisarius here, when he sat for Jeannie Deans's father, and the plaid has been worn as an ornament by every British and Scotch character from Prince Vortigern to the Marquis of Montrose :

‘ A painted vest Prince Vortigern had on,  
Which from a naked Pict his grandsire won, ’”

quoted the author, with mock solemnity.

“ Hang it ! none of your nonsense, Carew,” said the artist. “ Come, Belisarius, bring out the materials, and then you can go home. Mind and be early to-morrow ; seven we will say ; I shall rise at six.”

Belisarius produced the materials from a Tudor chest elaborately carved, and silver spoons from a Morisco cabinet of wrought iron, and, having heated some water in a curious Japanese iron kettle, left the party to enjoy themselves ; silently

they did so ; for sometimes Felix, looking at the intellectual faces of the two men, began to fancy that none in the world could be happier, "What a jolly life yours must be !" he said, "seeing your own creations grow beneath your hands ; you, Carew, always ready to give your readers healthy occupation for their minds, and often noble and pure thoughts ; you, Mr. Scumble, because you celebrate and perpetuate noble deeds, and are for ever striving nobly to represent the heroic. Your lives must have an elevation in them, which that of the city merchant, the mere money-grub, the solicitor, or the barrister cannot have. You——"

"What an enthusiast the young one is !" said Carew, brushing in to interrupt him. "Well, I dare say you are right. We *are* as happy as most people ; should be perfectly happy but for three things."

"What are they ?" asked Felix.

"Why, the first two are small and unimportant. They are simply two things : critics for authors, and the hanging committee for artists. The third concerns us both : we are men, mere men. Perhaps we do appear," continued the satirist, with mock gravity, "something more than human to



the young enthusiasts in the outside public, but the fact is the same nevertheless. However, the subject is getting personal. Cimabue here is the happiest of the lot, because an artist's work, like that of an architect, is always visible and easily appreciated, and the eye of the public is generally better informed than its mind; our black and white is more difficult of recognition, and very bad artists in my way are too often very popular. However, to change the subject, let me tell you Cimabue's story, and, to make it more life-like, fancy the good fellow forty miles in the country, and that you were reading this story out of a book."

CHAPTER V.

IN THE STUDIO OF C. SCUMBLE, R.A. (*in futuro*),

(*Continued.*)

**M**RS. CROWSFOOT," said George Carew, commencing his narration by knocking the ashes out of his pipe, "was in ecstasies of suspense—it was seldom indeed that she was in any other kind of ecstasies—but really the suspense into which she was 'thrown' equalled that of a penny-a-liner's 'neighbourhood' when a murder takes place. Neighbourhoods in which such 'coincidences' happen, and people of Mrs. Crowsfoot's temperament, are always 'thrown' into something. They never fall—they are 'thrown;' and in this instance the respectable relict of Crowsfoot, of Putney, was 'thrown' into a perfect lion's den of suspense.

"Suspense—that is the word; other people might call it repressed curiosity—the widow termed it suspense.

“The truth is, that Mrs. Crowsfoot let furnished apartments on the first, and unfurnished ditto upon her second floor. The windows of the latter (it had three) had a very pleasant and airy aspect, and also a strong north light, which was perhaps the reason that the rooms were selected by Mrs. Crowsfoot’s tenant. The first floor was let to a perfect Model, a man who always paid upon quarter-day, who never scolded the servants, who was ever at home at eight o’clock at night; and who, in return for his goodness—for these people know their value—expected the house to be kept as silent as the catacombs whilst he was at home. The Model had been allowed to have his way; he was intensely selfish; and, as the rooms suited him very well, he stayed, and his landlady quoted him, wondered at, and praised him.

“The second floor occupant, at the time I refer to, had been in Mrs. Crowsfoot’s house but one quarter, and had paid, when he came, for two in advance. He had furnished his rooms himself—he had them cleaned by his own hand, or, at least, one of them, and never allowed either his landlady or her servant to enter his front room. To his bed-chamber, indeed, they were welcome to come and go; but the adjoining room, wherein

he spent most of his time, was a sanctuary hitherto unprofaned. Hence Mrs. Crowsfoot's suspense.

"You suggest the keyhole. That had flashed into Mrs. Crowsfoot's mind at an early stage of the process—minute observations had been made through it. The widow was as practised as an artilleryman, and could take flying eye-shots at any angle with a precision which showed that she was an adept at the art; but there was something in *that* room which puzzled her beyond everything. There, in a chair, not far from the door, sat, night and day—for she had seen her—a female, beautiful in form, with a profusion of light brown hair, calm, and apparently in grief, bent forward and weeping—she had heard her sob and sigh, quietly, but deeply. Sometimes she was standing, and sometimes she reclined. Mrs. Crowsfoot could see so far; *once*, indeed, when her lodger had gone for a walk, the widow had caught sight of a very beautiful face; but the knock of the mysterious man who had paid for that Blue Beard chamber frightened the observer away.

"One thing was certain, the incarcerated lady *never left the house*—nay, never stirred from that room; and Mrs. Crowsfoot was ready to swear, before any magistrate, that she had never legally

entered it. Not that Mr. Cimabue Scumble, her mysterious friend, did not have visitors; of these, it may be said that they formed part of Mrs. Crowsfoot's 'suspense;' and that lady objected to them strongly; but of what use was that, when two quarters' rent in advance had been demanded and paid? These visitors were such queer people: two of them (the men) were foreigners; the one, a huge fellow with a short cropped republican head, and flowing beard and moustache; the other, a fair man, of less tremendous proportions, but whose light beard and hair were equally foreign, and, to her, repulsive. He was a German — 'And,' said the landlady, 'what good ever came from Germany, except Prince Albert and the broom-girls?'

“Then the ladies, generally pretty, but with such a curious confident air; so loose in their gait and dress, without the slightest appearance of stays about them. Mrs. Crowsfoot was a perfect enthusiast for stays, and declared that the people who did not wear them could not possibly be of any good in the community. The way in which these ladies and gentlemen walked in and out of Mr. Scumble's sacred apartment, and stayed there for so long a time without having any refreshment

excepting pots of half-and-half, offended the landlady; there was something very wrong in the society which could tolerate such ways. And, gracious goodness!—no, you will not believe it—the widow looked through the keyhole of the door, upon one day, and saw—but I am not at liberty to write it. What she saw, or whom, shall be a secret for ever.

“It may have occurred in your experience, that your landlady has made you a depositary of her secrets. So was it now with Mr. Cittichap, of the first floor, who was intrusted with the accumulated and still accumulating mystery. There had been, within two weeks of the arrival of the mysterious lodger, a packing-case, just large enough to hold a human body, brought to the house; it was heavy, very heavy, and at the top pierced with holes. Mrs. Crowsfoot did not hesitate to call these holes breathing-holes, and hinted—indeed, went much further than hinting—that in that packing-chest the victim of her second floor lodger arrived. Poor creature! What things are done in London! Here, within the heart of the metropolis, with policemen round and about her, was a tragedy going on, as deep as was that of the Iron Mask—a mystery as impenetrable as

the identification of King Charles' executioner, or as that of the writer of 'Junius' Letters.'

"Besides this, the lodger would persist in half-closing his windows all day. The shutters were half shut, so as to admit light only from the top; nay, sometimes two out of the three were closed altogether, so as, in a manner, to baffle his landlady, who thereon made friends with the opposite neighbour, and borrowed an opera glass to peep into them. 'Law bless me!' said the opposite neighbour; 'I know what he is: he's a hartist.' 'A hartist?' said Mrs. Crowsfoot, 'he's no hartist. I had one lived with me before, and *he* used to have lords and ladies visit him in coaches; and used to paint wonderful; and, oh! such beautiful ladies they were; such 'eds of air, and such dresses; and then he had great men come in uniforms to be painted, and Scumble has none o' them. Oh, he's no hartist, you may rely upon it, mem.' And the opposite neighbour owned that, in this particular, Mrs. Crowsfoot was right.

"Beside this window-closing, there was a screen in the room, which, being frequently drawn across the doorway, completely shut out any peeping. Sometimes it was more completely drawn round

than at others; sometimes, but seldom, it was closed. What could he want with a screen? Was he a forger, and the wretched woman his wife? Was he a gambler, or a villain who had run away with some lady, who lived with him in dread and shame, apart from all?

“Oh, sir, what shall I do?” said the lady, in distress, to Mr. Cittichap; “my house is becoming a *“Mystery of London.”*”

“Get rid of him as quietly as possible,” was the answer; “do not make a row over it; if the house is at all likely to be exposed through it, I must leave you, I must really;” and the lodger glanced round his comfortable room, to every corner of which he had got used, with quite an air of distress. “By the way,” said he, “have you corresponded with her? Is there no way of doing so?”

“The widow had thought of it before—there was only one way, and that had been tried. She had, upon two occasions, poked letters under the door, couched in general terms, which she had hoped would have reached the prisoner, but they did not produce any result.

“The truth is, about these letters, that they had fallen into the hands of the very person against whom they were written, and the lady, for whose



advantage they were intended, had never read them. In fact, Mr. Scumble himself had been seen coming down stairs one morning, reading a note, in a female hand, to this effect—

“ ‘UNFORTUNATE STRANGER,—Friends are at hand. They will relieve you. Communicate with us. If paper be denied you, use linen, or a plate. Trust in us. We can take measures for your immediate release from the perils which surround you. When unobserved, knock three times with the poker against the fourth scroll of the paper from the mantel-shelf. All will be well.

“ ‘Yours, &c.,

“ ‘A FRIEND IN NEED.’

“Alas! each letter must in succession have fallen into Scumble’s hands, for he was heard, in a satirically jocular way, to accuse his accomplices (the visitors aforementioned) of having written them, and of having dropped them in his chamber. It was when these visitors came, that Mrs. Crowsfoot tried to peep into the room, but a large screen was drawn before the door, which served effectually to block out any introvision as regards the chamber. And then the very windows were always blinded, the upper half of the shutters alone being left

open, so as to shed a little light down upon the dark doings of Scumble.

“Under these circumstances, the landlady, setting all personal interest afar from her, determined to penetrate into the mystery, or to part with her lodger. She would do this quietly—she would have no noise, but do it she would ; she could live in suspense no longer.

“Mrs. Crowsfoot was polite to all her lodgers—it was her rule of life, of which she never repented, and by which she had once acquired a legacy. But people who are always polite are, somehow or another, generally the rudest people in creation. Nothing can be more insulting than a sarcastic politeness, and Mrs. Crowsfoot had achieved a manner which cut one to the bone, as sharply, certainly, and suddenly as a Javan kris. It was with this weapon upon the tip of her practised tongue, together with the defensive armour of a new silk gown and a widow’s cap, that she hoped to attack and rout Mr. Scumble. She waited for him for a whole hour before he arose, and heard him whistling, splashing, puffing, and blowing in his shower bath, and hissing, as he rubbed himself dry, as if he were an hostler rubbing down a horse. ‘A great vulgar fellow ! and to serve my

house as he has done!" said his landlady to herself. "I'll give him notice this very day, that I will, and get him out by the quarter-day."

"The unconscious Scumble next went to work with two hair-brushes upon his bushy black hair, and the enemy outside heard the "rasp, rasp" of bristle against bristle for some time. Then came a silence: the mysterious lodger was adjusting and tying his cravat. Mrs. Crowsfoot, bursting with impatience, listened and waited, and waited and listened.

"At length boots were pulled on, the walking coat put on—a very loose affair which buttoned to the chin and let the great Scumble beard (celebrated and well known in Frith Street) fall upon the breast; then a felt sombrero was tossed upon the head, and the manly stride of the lodger advanced to the chamber-door. He was in great glee, for he whistled, and sang, and chuckled, and said to himself, once or twice, that he thought it would 'do.' His landlady caught the words. 'Oh, you're a nice gentleman, you are!' she said. 'Do! yes, I think it will do. I'll do for you, and no mistake.'

"Nevertheless, her determination rather retired apace, when Scumble, walking, as Speed hath

it, 'like one of the lions,' opened the door suddenly, and looked her full in the face. Her nefarious practice of peeping had rendered her guilty as to her feelings, and she felt that she might not be able to answer very well how she obtained this mighty secret. 'Truth,' said the widow, 'stands upon four legs—a lie upon one; therefore, I'll out with it—I will, at once—I'll speak out, I will—yes, that I will.'

"She had retreated up four stairs when her lodger came out, so as to appear casually passing, and she had, therefore, to overtake him as he descended. She caught him just by the door of the quiet lodger; that individual had begun his first egg.

"'Oh! Mr. Scumble, sir,' cried the lady, in the most frigidly polite tones.

"'Ma'am,' said the individual addressed, taking off his hat and bowing, 'ma'am, what is it?'

"'I want to speak to you, sir,' said the widow, severely; 'I am grieved that you should have used my house as you have used it; and I came, sir, to say that I give you warning.'

"'Warning!' said Scumble, innocently; 'what do you warn me of?'

"'Oh, you——. Sir,' answered the landlady,

giving herself a severe check, 'I give you notice to quit my house for ever. To think that I should ever be subject to what I have; that my house should be mentioned in the papers!'

"'In the what, ma'am?' said Scumble. 'What is all this about? Take care, woman, what you impute to me.'

"'Woman!' shrieked the widow; 'woman! and this to me! Here, Mrs. Dander! Mrs. Dander!'

"Now Mrs. Dander was a worn-out old house-keeper, who served Mrs. Crowsfoot as servant; but that did not prevent the model lodger, who loved a row, from relinquishing his second egg, and popping upon the combatants with a vile pun.

"'Egad, sir,' said Mr. Cittichap—'egad, sir,' and he nodded at Mr. Scumble, 'you must have insulted this lady very intensely to have fetched her Dander up so early.'

"Mr. Scumble was standing with his face to Mrs. Crowsfoot, his eyes opened wide, and his nostrils dilated rather more with excitement than anger. His landlady, on the contrary, with her lips tightly closed, was pressing one hand upon her side and leaning with the other upon the balusters, her breath getting fast and short, and her whole figure

swollen with rage. Mrs. Dander, in the meantime, was waddling upstairs, puffing and blowing under the exertion; for it was the peculiarity of this excellent creature's life, that she was daily being killed by 'them stairs.' Once upon level ground, and she was equal to anything; but 'them stairs' killed her.

"'Dander,' cried her mistress, addressing her by her surname as if she were an actress—and it is to be remarked that amongst the gentler sex only actresses, young ladies educated at the Academy of Music, and milliners, dispense with the prefix, and talk to each other as we men do—'Dander, I appeal to you; what did you see in this man's room—in *my* room, in *my* house?'

"Dander was at her last gasp, and, although adjured, for that reason remained silent.

"'Now, pray be composed, ma'am,' said Cittichap, in a conciliatory tone; 'and Mr. Secondfloor—I really don't know your name—what is all this about, sir?'

"'What the deuce have you to do with it?' cried the astonished Scumble; 'perhaps you will be kind enough to be silent and shut up.'

"Cittichap shrank backwards, alarmed at the

fierce looks of Scumble ; and the landlady, turning to him with the sweetest smile, said—

“ ‘ Thank you, sir ; I am sure I expected such behaviour from so proper a gentleman ; do not interfere—he might also behave as a ruffian. No words, sir ; don't speak to me'—this was addressed to Scumble.

“ ‘ Now, Mrs. Dander, *what* did you see in this person's room ?'

“ ‘ You,' gasped Dander, with her hand on her side—‘ you see it as well.'

“ ‘ I know I did,' replied the landlady, majestically.

“ ‘ Through the keyhole,' added Dander ; ‘ and you had a cold in your eye and the brow-ague for a fortnight afterwards.'

“ ‘ Well, woman,' interposed Mr. Cittichap from behind his landlady, ‘ well, what was it ?'

“ ‘ A woman,' said Dander.

“ ‘ Good gracious !' said Cittichap, ‘ you don't say that ?'

“ ‘ I do,' said Mrs. Crowsfoot ; ‘ I say more ; and I say that for more than two months—yes, for ten weeks and for three days—that poor creature has been incarcerated in that ruffian's room, and has never stirred out !'

“‘A monster!’ said the model lodger. ‘Why don’t you call the police, and have his room searched?’

“‘I will, sir; thank you, sir, I will,’ said the widow. ‘And now, sir, was I not right in forbidding this person my house?’

“The face of Scumble wore a grim smile; a savage look of satisfaction lighted up his face, and his eyes had even a merry twinkle in them; such was his coolness and audacity. He advanced towards Mr. Cittichap, and said—

“‘A monster, am I? you shall pay for this.’

“‘Police!’ shouted Cittichap.

“‘Don’t, sir, don’t,’ cried Mrs. Crowsfoot; ‘never mind him. Don’t expose the house; it will get it into the papers. Now, Dander, what else did you see? Stand between him and the stairs, so that he don’t run away.’

“‘I shall not attempt, ma’am,’ said Cimabue, with the strange smile alluded to still upon his face; and he leant against the wall composedly.

“‘I see,’ said Dander, in answer to her mistress, ‘a lot of his friends, as he had got me to get porter for, all arranging theirselves and a-stretching theirselves, and a-busting theirselves; and every one on ’em was stripped to the waistys,



and they was a making *poses plasticks* of themselves all around of this unfortunate young lady as was still and mute with sorrow.'

" 'There, sir!' said the widow, with a triumphant and appealing look to Mr. Cittichap, 'there, sir! what do you think of that?'

"The model lodger turned up his eyes, shut his teeth, and, after the manner of Mr. Charles Kean, muttered, 'Beast!'

" 'What did you say, sir?' shouted Scumble; 'what?' And he sprang towards him; but Mrs. Crowsfoot forestalled him, and defended her lodger by falling in a fainting condition into the latter's arms.

" 'I'm your man, sir,' cried Cittichap; 'but I am at present engaged with this lady;' and then he shouted 'Police!' with all his might.

" 'Ay, we will have the police,' said Scumble, coolly. 'Dander, run and fetch one.'

" 'No, don't: don't leave us,' said the Firstfloor, in an alarmed tone.

" 'I shall not touch you,' returned Cimabue. 'Fetch one, Mrs. Dander, at once.'

"The old woman did as she was bidden, and X 24 walked in shortly afterwards. In the meantime, Mrs. Crowsfoot had revived, and had said, in a

faint voice, holding still tightly to the collar of her model lodger, 'Ah, sir, he had some reason for never letting me into his room; but to think of my house—of our house—coming to this;' and she squeezed Cittichap tightly.

"'Woman!' said Scumble, 'I *had* reason, which shall soon appear.'

"'It shall; indeed it shall, monster,' returned the landlady, again comfortably crumpling her widow's cap against Mr. Cittichap's cheek.

"'Now, then,' said the policeman, who approached the group with the gasping Dander—'now, then, who is the householder here, and what am I wanted for?'

"'To search my room, if you please,' said Scumble. 'I have something nefarious concealed, so my landlady says; and so, perhaps you will all walk this way.'

"So saying, he led the assembled people upstairs. The policeman, with an important step, followed him; next came Mrs. Crowsfoot, supported by her model lodger; and the excellent Dander, still out of breath, brought up the rear.

"It was remarkable that, during this short transit, the guilty Scumble still wore upon his bearded face the same impenetrable smile. He

opened the door coolly and deliberately, and the whole *cortège* passed in. The room was bare, without a carpet, and certainly scarcely furnished. Upon an immense easel in the centre of the room stood a large historical picture, just finished; the paint was yet wet, and luckily no dust had settled upon it. A moveable dais, with a tent-like structure of red baize upon it, stood in the corner, and upon that, lying on her face, was stretched, in white garments, the victim of Cimabue Scumble, upon whom he had practised his nefarious designs.

“Mrs. Crowsfoot gave a shriek of horror, and cried, ‘We are too late! too late!’ which was answered only by a hoarse roar of laughter from Scumble, when, after raising the victim, she let it drop stiffly to the ground, with the cry of ‘*Good gracious, it’s only a dummy!*’

“‘There,’ said Cimabue, ‘the murder is out. That figure is my lay figure. I have been long engaged upon this picture, and I did *not* think it necessary to tell my landlady about it; and also, I *did* think it requisite to shut my door closely, and not to let these women kick up a dust here. Now, Mrs. What’s-your-name, what have you to say to this?’

"The widow was nonplussed. 'I—beg—your pardon,' she said. 'I hope, sir, you won't——'

"Scumble did not let her finish the sentence, but turned to Cittichap. 'And now, sir,' said he, 'what have you to say to calling me a "beast" and a "monster"?' "

"'Why, a-hem,' said that gentleman, 'that I was only defending a lady; and you know, sir, that—a-hem——. I'd better go and finish my breakfast; my third egg is as cold as a stone.'

"'Don't go, sir—don't leave us yet,' said Mrs. Crowsfoot, faintly, 'assist me down stairs.'

"'With pleasure, ma'am,' replied the model. 'And you, Mrs. Dander,' said he, turning on her fiercely, since he could not visit his wrath elsewhere, 'why did you mislead us, too, with your *poses plastiques* and——'

"'There they are, sir,' said the artist, pointing with pride to a group of half-naked Britons. 'We painters are obliged to have models, and don't generally, as people suppose, get it all "out of our own heads."'

"The group, policeman and all, turned to the magnificent production, which hath subsequently adorned the walls of the Academy, and expressed

their approbation in terms more warm than judicious; so warm, that Cimabue, quite appeased, declared that he was about to send the picture off that very day, and that he would forget and forgive all if Mr. Cittichap would give a dinner in the very room as an apology. He then put a shilling into the policeman's hand, and ran down stairs to get a van to move his work of art; and thus escaped the infliction of further apologies.

“Mr. Cittichap did give a dinner; and it was at that repast that I first learnt the story, being invited thereto by Cimabue; and was witness also of the offer of the model lodger's hand, he being in his cups at the time, to Mrs. Crowsfoot, who now owns that limb, without, indeed, the heart of the model.

“Of the picture, what shall be said? perhaps I had better read the notice of the ‘Kit-Cat Journal’ upon it. Scumble has got it here in his scrapbook.

“‘*Boadicea haranguing the Iceni* (No. 404). *Cimabue Scumble*. The artist has here come out in full force. The injured British Queen, with her two daughters seated at her knees, is making an impassioned speech to the assembled Britons. A

Roman prisoner, with steadfast look and raven beard, contrasts forcibly with the fair-haired and yellow-bearded aborigines of this favoured isle; whilst the fair daughters of the Queen, the one in wild, and the other in passive grief, cannot fail to arrest the attention of the spectator. The costume is correct, the grouping excellent, and the drawing fine. Scumble is an adept at anatomy; each figure is a study. We may object to the handling, which is too massive; and also to the flesh of the Britons, which is a little too pink; but, upon the whole, it is a national picture, worthily painted. We predict great things from Scumble.'

"So said the critique. Has Scumble done great things?" asked George Carew, looking with a smile at Felix, who had been absorbed in the story. "Well, perhaps not. He has not fulfilled his promise; but how many a blossom upon the early summer fruit-trees, fair, beauteous, sound, and excellent in promise, will bring forth but sorry fruit; how little of that fruit will ripen, how much fall by untimely frosts; and, of that which ripens, how little will give forth seed to the world, which shall grow up for our children's uses into noble trees! Scumble did not fulfil his promise, perhaps;

who amongst us does? but he did do this: he stayed for many years with Mr. and Mrs. Citti-chap (late Crowsfoot), and that lady and Mrs. Dander have been often heard to say 'that they never had a better friend than the MYSTERIOUS LODGER.'"

CHAPTER VI.

FELIX SITS FOR HIS PORTRAIT.



AFTER our friends had laughed heartily at Mr. Scumble's early adventures, and the artist himself had remonstrated in strong terms on the "chaff" with which Carew had interspersed his narration, Felix, feeling for his latchkey, shook hands with his new friend and declared that he would seek his home.

"Very good," returned the author; "as I live near you I'll go with you. This fellow is a regular nightbird. He is up at all hours of the night, and I'm sure does no good to himself."

"Not so sure of that," returned Cimabue; "however, good night now. I shall be very happy to see you, sir," he said to Felix—for he was a very simple respectful man, this little somewhat shabby genius—"and if you will come some of these days I'll paint your portrait in return for your sitting; for I like your face."



Felix blushed, but did not feel at all angry with the good artist. "I'll come," said he; "Mrs. Straightways would be delighted, I am sure, with my picture done by such an eminent hand. My holidays come on shortly, and, unfortunately for my wife, I can't exchange them. The head of our room is a terrible old boor, and as despotic as the Grand Turk."

"Well, we'll help you to spend them, old boy," said George Carew. "I've been working too hard lately, and I mean to 'walk around,' as they say in America. A lovely country that, Cimabue! Why don't you rush over there and find out how art flourishes? Good night."

"Good night," returned the painter, seeing his friends to the door; then, lighting a fresh pipe, he sat down to read Sir Joshua Reynolds' Discourses, and, having paid a fresh tribute to the genius of that great man, went to bed to dream of his art, and of the Prince of Wales visiting his studio, and graciously stooping to pick up his maulstick. He was full of romance and love for his art, and never for a moment thought of anything but that art. His life was therefore a happy one. Can a lawyer say so much? Does a divine, absorbed in theology or the active duties

of his office, revert in his day and night dreams so frequently and so happily to his duties? Scumble thought of his art day and night; he never saw a pretty child but he fancied how well it would suit such and such a picture; no lady fell into a graceful attitude but Cimabue marked it, if he were present, and wished that, like Hogarth, he could take home a reminiscence of it on his thumb-nail. He was as constant a watcher of the heavens as an astrologer, but it was to mark the cloud-beauties of the sky; he was learned in the cirrus and the nimbus, and would tell anyone who was with him what colours should be mixed to produce such and such an effect. He had—not unwisely, as some people affected to think—married one of his models; and the lady, who perfectly understood him, and worshipped him and his art, used to look out fine faces for him, which, had she been richer and more highly born and connected, she would perhaps have failed to do.

“Cim,” she would say, “I’ve found you *such* a beautiful Briton, all flaxen hair, and such blue eyes, Cim! oh, they *are* lovely, they are!”

“Have you?” he would say, for a fine face put him in a good humour for all the day. “Where is it? Is it male or female, Bella?”

“Oh, it’s a girl, Cim, at a fur-shop in Oxford Street. ‘Law bless me, miss!’ thought I as she showed me some chinchillas, ‘shouldn’t I like to take you home in a cab, and pull off that muslin gown and wrap you up in those skins for my husband to paint! You must get her, my dear; you must. Such a lovely skin she’s got——”

“Bella, you’re a trump; you shall have the skin for a tippet and cuffs.”

“I mean *her* skin, Cim,” returned Bella; “it’s lovely, all red and white; and a perfect glow of beauty on the cheek—none of your Madame Rachel’s abominations.”

And so this good creature did manage to get the young lady, whose face created quite a sensation when seen in one of Scumble’s pictures in Suffolk Street. Bella was never a bit jealous, and, to tell the truth, looked out as often for a handsome male model as for one of the other sex. “When found make a note of,” was her motto; and perhaps it is to this generous behaviour of hers, that Scumble owes that reputation for freshness and variety which he has acquired.

As Felix found Mrs. Lotty progressing very nicely with the baby, and as, too, his chief insisted upon some one of the office who could be relied on

taking his holiday at once, so that an efficient representative should be found for her Majesty's Inland Sealing-wax Office during the chief's absence, it fell out that for three weeks or a month Felix Straightways had his own time very much on his hands.

"I shall not go out of town, Lotty," said he—determining in his mind that he would get Scumble to paint his portrait, and present it in a glorious gold frame to his wife, as a reward for well-doing, and a surprise when he should first carry her down-stairs.

"Oh, my dear," said the little wife, "you must be pining for fresh air, I am sure. Take a run down to the South Coast now."

"Pining!" returned the husband, exhibiting his browned and manly face; "do I look like it? No, my dear, I am going to visit Carew and some friends he has introduced me to, and we are going to take our amusement by visiting the suburbs, and Greenwich, and the Zoological Gardens, and——"

Not a word about Scumble's promise did he say.

"Are all Mr. Carew's friends literary men?" asked Lotty, somewhat dejectedly.

"No; some of them are artists, and, I can tell

you, wonderfully clever fellows too. Then, too, Carew is going to take a holiday with me; you know his time is his own."

"How nice!" said Lotty; "but, my dear"—here she looked ruefully and put out her white hand to him—"but, my dear, are not these literary men and these artists terribly wild fellows? You know what they say in society, and what my aunt, Lady Sanguine, said, who was once a great admirer of Doctor Lardner, you know, and you know, Felix, that the Doctor ran——"

"Bother Lady Sanguine, Lotty! what good did she ever do to us except give us—or you—those splay-footed, antique, wretched *ormolu* candlesticks for a wedding present? My dear Lotty, Carew is a noble fellow, fond of his children, fond of the memory of his wife. I declare I am ashamed of the way in which the world treats authors. It is ever ready to believe everything that is bad of them; ever ready to learn from their books, and yet to ignore the teachers. For shame! for shame! Why, Lotty, those very teachers must be hypocrites, or else, as they give us such true and noble thoughts, they *must* be noble men."

"Dear Felix," said his wife, perfectly convinced, "I will believe your Mr. Carew is the noblest and

the best of them ; I am sure he must be good to like you, my dear, and no doubt he gives up plenty of grand offers of friendship and loads of invitations to great people. Lady Sanguine, you know, was specially fond of having an author at her feasts. Don't you remember how she trotted out that great genius Mr. Simperly, M.P., who had made some wonderful translations from the Runic which the *Quarterly* noticed ? Well, you may go ; and every evening, dear, when you come home—you must not be out late, you know—you shall come home and tell me what you have seen."

So the thing was settled, and Felix, in great triumph, told George—blushing as he said it—how he had defended the authors.

"Ho ! ho !" laughed grim Carew, rubbing his unshaven beard with the back of his hand, and sticking his MSS. together ; "that's just what many think, and she, poor little lamb, accepts the reflex of the world's opinions for her own. Loads of invitations—eh, sure ! that's about as true as our wickedness."

"Ay ; but, Carew," said Felix, tapping the mantelshelf and the looking-glass, in the side of which were sticking invitations to this learned society, to that exhibition, or to view this piece of

presentation plate which the great silversmiths Burnish and Frost were making, "what do you say to these?"

"Ah! Felix, my boy, you will learn in time that a man is not loved for himself, but for his place. I get these things because people know that I am connected with the press, and they want a notice. Write 'Value received' on every one of those, even on Mrs. Sherringford's grand ball there. Has not Dickens shown you what Mrs. Leo Hunter was? Is not 'Leo,' the Latin for 'Lion,' and are not *nous autres* in some sense lions?"

Felix opened his eyes, not so much at the words as at the bitter tone of the author.

"Umph!" said George, after he had thus declared his creed. "I am not going to say any more. I shall make you just as selfish as myself. I am getting terribly so, old fellow. What should a boy of twenty-two summers, like you, know of the sentiments of a used-up old party like myself? The man of forty does not see things exactly in the same bright light as the youth of twenty," and the author hummed the tune of a song of Béranger's:

"Leste et joyeux je montais six étages,  
Dans un grenier, quand j'étais à vingt années."

Come along, I suppose you are going over to Scumble's; and I can tell you he's waiting for you. He's never satisfied when he has seen a fine face until he has painted it; and, young one, your 'mug' is worth remembering."

Felix put his arm through that of the broad-shouldered author, and went out, nothing loath, to the painter's. They found Scumble up and doing. That eminent man found that the long and leggy designs now so prevalent in art paid him as well as the more ambitious works which he gave to canvas; and Belisarius, without whom Scumble was nothing, turned his glittering eyes round to the two friends as they entered and saluted them with a familiar grin. He did nothing less; for the Roman general was attired in a country costume—an old brown shooting-jacket of Scumble's, a pair of leather spatter-dashes, and from a crooked stick over his shoulder depended a bundle in a handkerchief, while in his waist-belt was stuck a reaping-hook. The warrior was making a great stride forward, and stood with rigid muscles and set figure as stiff as a post.

"Ah, I see," said Carew, nodding; "making use of the old hoss again."

"Yes," returned Scumble; "for one of those



stupid, creamy, silly, moral stories in 'Cantwell's Magazine.' Of course we must be 'goody,' and therefore there is no incident. How, now, is a fellow to illustrate a number in which the only lively sentence is this—really the only sentence with motion in it—'Took his way over the fields to a distant farm'? You perceive Belisarius is going to a distant farm; and a capital farmer he makes. That will do; I'll give you another turn in the evening. Boxley the woodcutter—engraver he calls himself—will be sending for the block to-morrow."

"Capital magazine, Cantwell's?" asked Felix, who was a simple soul.

Then it was that George Carew made one of the most clever pantomimic faces ever seen, expressive of sudden sea-sickness; so expressive, indeed, that Belisarius and his master both burst out into a loud roar.

"As good as other magazines, p'raps," said Carew. "Pays a lot of men for their names and starts fair; falls into the respectable silly groove at last; objects to its love being made too strong, and takes good care to be always moral; is fond of small essays by clergymen which show that good people never starve, and by implication that

all they who are well to do and in comfortable circumstances are good people. Do you see that? They publish—those people—a kind of tea-table philosophy, and ‘go in’ for what will sell.”

“Ought we not to be very happy to think that what is good and harmless *will* sell?” asked Felix.

“Good and harmless,” sneered Carew; “I demur to both adjectives. That which is untrue can never be either good or harmless.”

“Bravo, Boanerges! I quite agree with you; but in the meantime I make a livelihood in illustrating tea-table literature.”

“Ah! you are a base lot,” said the author, laughing, but rather bitterly than heartily; “but, my poor fellow, if we authors and artists only knew our own power, how we might help on the glorious times that are to come! The publisher does not sell the book; it is what you and I give the public that sells the book; and if we would only be true to ourselves we could reform the world.”

“And a pretty reform we should make of it,” said Felix, “seeing that we ourselves *are* the world.”

“Ah, there’s something in that, too,” returned the author. “I tell you what it is, Straightways

—you must be one of us: you are too clever for ordinary society.”

Felix, in the meantime, had been looking over the studio, and saw beauties in it by daylight that he missed by gaslight. The lay figure, of which so terrible a story was told, looked, it is true, less lifelike, and the general accessories more shabby and dingy, but on the whole the studio was improved by its shabbiness, while the light brought into being a thousand beauties in the artist's sketches, begun and not finished, which lay about in profusion; for, with that love of creation which underlies every true artist, Mr. Cimabue Scumble had expended much genius in a most prodigious number of sketches, each of which had promised to be the most beautiful ever done, and each in its turn had been laid aside with some degree of disappointment.

At present Scumble was busily engaged with Belisarius in placing a Louis Quatorze chair on an estrade ready for Felix, and preparing the light so that he could present a fair subject for the painter. A fine kitcat size canvas, fresh and as yet unspoiled, as Carew said, was being placed on the easel ready to receive our hero's face.

“Hallo!” cried Felix, at last; “here’s a sad little story here; what is it?”

“Oh, that,” said Scumble, squeezing out some paint from a tube—“Oh, that—well, it has a long story connected with it, and if you will sit down in that chair I will tell it you.”

“A little lame boy in a mourning cloak and weepers standing near a shabby old man. Why, I could make a story out of that myself,” said Carew.

“Ah! I dare say you could,” returned the artist; “but truth is strange—stranger than fiction, as you did *not* say. How proud you would have been to have been quoted all over England like the noble bard!”

“Bother the noble bard! let us come to the story. Sit, cousin Felix; sit, good cousin Straightways. Will that do, Scumble? What a wonderful thing art is, is it not? Well, if the divine Urbino himself would transmit my mug to posterity, I should think the matter dear at the price, the pains and the penalties of sitting for it.”

“A little to the right; chin not so much elevated. Now don’t look as if you were Ajax defying the lightning, but as if you were simply yourself—an honest, middle-class English gentleman, and a good fellow, as you know you are.

Ah! that gives you more confidence: don't laugh, please. Look over at Carew, there, and mark how carefully he fills his pipe. He always smokes after breakfast to compose his thoughts: that is why his leaders are so respectably heavy. Quite ready now? Belisarius, prepare some pale ale, bottled, and biscuits, behind that screen; and now, while you have that interested look——”


“Catch, ere she fall, the Cynthia of this minute,”

quoted Carew, cleverly sending a ring of smoke up to the rafters of the studio.

“I will tell you the story of the sketch that interested you; following the lead of our master in letters there, I will tell my tale as if it were out of a book.”

## CHAPTER VII.

## THE SEXTON'S WINDOW.

HY a sexton," said Scumble, mixing some colours on his palette, and gazing intently into the face of his sitter, as he commenced his story, "should exist in a town wherein he is allowed to bury no man it is not for us to inquire. Suffice it that he so exists; that his bell, with its little black wooden handle, hangs by a jointed bit of rusty wire just outside his window; and in the porch of a church, around which roars by day and night, now loud, now faint, now stirred to a wild frenzy, and then settling down to an indistinct and sullen noise, the ceaseless traffic of London. At some distance from the porch which leads to it is a tall, four-spired bell-tower, wherein hangs one of the most solemn bells in the world, to the sound of which, as it strikes eight in the mornings, sunny, or clouded with fog, or whitened by the thick-falling snow, some

hundreds of human beings have been brought out to die ; and once upon a time, if not now, the sexton had to toll the passing-bell for the poor wretches who, from the high scaffold, could see the grey stones of the church, the graveyard with its patch of green, and the clinging ivy which has crept up the walls and covered the spaces between the windows ; nay, in casting their eyes up to heaven as they passed out of the low door of the chief prison of the ancient city of which I am speaking, the condemned ones might have seen the heavens around the four spires of the church, which rears itself above the sexton's window, and have noted, with a glance quick as the lightning's flash, that the four vanes on the steeple-top pointed four different ways ; 'yea,' says Howel the traveller, 'like unreasonable people hard to reconcile, who never looked all four upon one point of the heavens.'

“The little window looks upon a faded churchyard, on which the rain has fairly had its play, and, undisturbed by the sweet winds of heaven, has beaten the very life and soul out of the earth and the green things upon the earth, and formed nothing but splashed cups of soft mud. But a few trees, worthy of a better place, such as a paradise in soft Devonian wood or on breezy Sussex down,

struggle to add verdure to God's acre, though it be in a smoky city, and man's dead lie unheeded and forgotten with the roar of human seas around them. Trees are affected by artificial light, and, a good old gardener tells us, die for want of sleep. Do they ever want to go out of town? Do they not dream, as they murmur in the hot summer air, of soft virgin mould and country showers? Do they not sigh to shed, as do our town plane-trees, their sooty bark, and wrap themselves in green soft moss, and listen to the songs of birds—to the piping country larks, woodlarks—none of your town-bred skylarks, who sit perched upon their squares of turf like fat landed proprietors, but who, unlike some of those large-acred lords, peer through the iron bars of their cages, and, without repining, pour out full-throated songs in praise of the warm sunshine, the blue sky, and heaven itself.

“Inside this little window you may see the sexton in his room. He is an old man, with a bare head, nearly as naked as a billiard-ball, and looking like a long yellow egg somewhat out of shape. A few books, a dozen or so parochial notices, a hat turned up at one end of the brim, from a constant habit of its wearer of looking up at the bell-



ropes; a cotton pocket-handkerchief, of a faded blue colour; a stout, worn stick, with a large mud mushroom at the end, and very shiny and crooked in the handle; and a little crutch—a child's crutch only—in the corner of the room.

“Such things,” continued the artist, after rising and looking intently into the eyes of his sitter, “the eye of any one will catch, as he looks into the room of Mr. Mathew Bohn, Sexton of St. Saviour's-at-Hill. Above the mantelshelf is a blunderbuss, with a brass barrel and a flint lock, with a priming-pan as big as a saltcellar; and there, too, polished and kept as an ornament, is a bell of somewhat ancient date. If any one wishes to know more about that hand-bell, a tall black board outside the door will tell him that good citizen Dowe did leave, two hundred and fifty years ago, a sum of money, that the sexton might toll, in the still hour of night, this hand-bell as near as he could to the cell of the fast-dying man—a man dying in sound health, bethink you—and cry out a kind of doggerel warning him of his fate:—

‘ All you that in the condemned hole do lie,  
Prepare you, for to-morrow you shall die;  
And, when St. Saviour's bell to-morrow tolls,  
The Lord have mercy on your souls!’

“In those good times how often—let us say at least every Monday morning—was some poor creature awakened by the rough summons of the bellman from the sleep which Nature had kindly given him, as a respite from the thoughts of wrong and cruelty, neglect and death, which racked his worn, tired brain. ‘And many died innocent then, sir,’ said the sexton to me. ‘Those were dreadful days—days of blood-money, days when Jonathan Wild, and some o’ them awful men as wicked authors and publishers make heroes of, bred up their victims to the gallows, just as one breeds chickens for the spit.’ True enough it is. ‘But, after all, they were good old times then,’ added the old man, and he nodded his head, and began a low whistle, expressive chiefly, it may be, of his admiration for the times.

“‘Mr. Dowe, sir, he did a good thing, though,’ said the sexton one day to me as I sat by him in his room near the porch. ‘He meant well, you see; and them as means well cannot always go wrong anyhow. You see the High Toby Swells who died game—the Gentleman Jacks, and Jack Sheppards, and such people, did not die off there then?’ (he nodded his head in the direction of the

city prison); 'but there was crowds come early to see 'em brought out, and they followed 'em too: and some on 'em stepped boldly into the cart, and sat on their coffins; and some hung down their heads and wept; and them as was any way currish, the crowd, I've heerd, shouted at and jeered. Poor souls! a many of 'em hung for stealing of five shillings, may be. But the lads that died game came out in a tarnished laced coat, and a cocked hat may be, with a lace scarf, bought by some women who loved 'em, for the last ride on to Tyburn. For you see, sir, that among the many things that men 'a got to thank God for is that women don't desert 'em at the last, whether they are as good as heaven's saints, or as bad as—they as is the opposite to such, the Lord forgive 'em. Well, sir, to prepare 'em for that dreadful ride, my ancestor in this office, him as went before me long years ago, used to look over the yard wall, and cry out, "All good people, pray heartily for these poor souls who are going to their death!"'

"'Poor souls, indeed! Why, this place is thronged with memories,' said I, looking into the quiet wondering face of the speaker.

"'Yes, yes,' said the sexton. 'Up those wide

stairs that lead to our galleries, how many prayerful souls have mounted ! how few steps go up now ! We fill our galleries with charity boys, sir, and, as I sit in my seat, I can look down on the young rascals flocking round the big organ, and looking staid and solemn enough in their faces, 'cos they fronts the master, but playing at odd and even behind his back, or suckin' away at physic bottles full of liquorice-water, which they thinks finer than champagne, I dare say. Boys will be boys, sir ; and in our City churches, which are not very full anyhow, it's lonesome like for children.'

“ ‘It is indeed,’ I answered. ‘It would be well to have children’s services, as we have children’s story-books and magazines ; and in those litanies one could tell them all the love and beauty of the gentle faith, and give them the sweet-scented flowers of religion, without the thorns of doubt and the brambles of wickedness and error.’

“ ‘Ay, ay, sir,’ said the sexton, taking up the polished little crutch and dandling it on his knee with evident affection ; ‘that’s just what little Jim said, years ago. He’s a wise child, sir ; very wise indeed. You should hear him ; it would do you good. He plays at parson sometimes, and reads me a solemn sermon, I can tell you.’

“ ‘How old is he now ?’ I asked.

“ ‘The same as ever ; just rising eight,’ answered the sexton, shaking his bald little head, and looking dreamily in the fire. ‘They don’t grow old there ; there’s no time, no day and night, no striking of the clock or tolling of the death-bell up in heaven. Well, before little Jim became as he was, the very last grave as I opened here, on the north side of the church, was to put away Jim’s mother, who went away from me as all the people go, and left me and Jim a-waiting. He was only six, and he stood in his black weepers and little cloak on the side of the coffin, and said, quite calmly, “Mother won’t come again.” “No,” says I, “Jim, my man, she won’t,” and I choked like ; “but she was obliged to go,” says I, “because she was called ; but where she is she’ll wait for us.” “Oh,” said the boy, looking bright and sensible, “that’ll do then ;” and he never asked a word, but laid his little pale face aside of mine in the night, and when he woke up in his pain—for some drunken fool had thrown the child down and lamed him long before—he said, “Mother waits for us, father ; when shall we two start ?”

“ ‘You must know that he was not sad, sir ; he was as merry as a bird, and hopped about the church-

yard on his little crutch, calling it his garden. He didn't grow in his body, it was all in his mind, sir. He learnt his letters off the toms, or out of the church books, and used to look up to the stone cherubs as his little brothers. I often wondered at that child—so wise, so thoughtful, looking, as he would sometimes, from the tower window—for I carried him up there on fine days—at the crowds of people going on, and never wanting to leave me to go out and play. "See, father," he would say, "there they all go past and leave us; they never, never come and take us, for we wait for mother till we can go home there."

"He had no more doubt, sir, that that was *home* than I have now—now he's gone to it, and sometimes comes to me. He used to think some of the verses on the tombstones very queer. "Affliction sore long time I bore," he used to sing, as if it were a funny song; for he said that if one tried to forget one's pains, and looked forward to goin' home, as the boys that came and played with him amid the grave-stones did to their holiday, one wouldn't mind it much. When the sun came round in the evenings, near to settin' like, it glinted from the west along the wall of the church, and fell upon the grave of his

mother, where Jim would go and sit. It was behind the church, for the wardens didn't allow such as me to have one of the best places. Yes, sir; tombs is like situations. I once took little Jim up to the big cemetery, for a treat—up at Kensal Green there—and there,' said he, 'were the tombs all shoving each other, and pressing into front ranks along the sides of the walks, shoulder to shoulder. "Come, dress up there," says a big monument, "and you little grave-stone fall back to rear rank." Yes, sir, they sizes them just like they do the grenadier company in a regiment. Well, we've got one of the hinder ranks; we are rather squeezed into a corner; but when the last trump sounds, and they beat to arms up there, I dare say we shall be able to get out. You see I've been an old soldier, sir, and know all about it. I used to drill Jim with his crutch, and when he said (because we tried to grow flowers on the grave and for want of air they withered)—when he said as our bed was a little too backwarder, I told him that one of the manœuvres in war was to change face, left half face, left half face again, or right about face at once; and that then the front rank fell into the rear after all. In summer evenings, when the old bells about here chimed the evenin'

hymn, little Jim came out to this corner bit, with his crutch and his milk, and looked to his flowers. He had great patience with 'em, but somehow they wouldn't grow. They looked beautiful and smelt sweet for, oh! so short a time; then grew spindly, and died; and I couldn't find no comfort for Jim, but he found it for himself. Yes, sir, he thought it out in this ways:

“‘Father,’ says he, one day, in the winter, looking up with an eye as bright as a young blackbird’s, ‘there’s a many flowers we’ve put on mother’s grave.’

“‘Yes, Jim,’ I answered.

“‘And none on 'em ever growed much to speak on,’ says he.

“‘I can't say they did, Jim,’ I returned, thoughtfully, for them flowers somehow mouldered down; they tried to grow, they did, I'm thinking, but they was unsuccessful; and when things are unsuccessful, somehow we blames 'em.

“‘You see,’ says he, ‘though it’s a bed for mother and us, it’s a grave for them poor things, brought all out of the country, may be out of the sweet fields and the scented hedgerows that I read about, and so, taking to their grave, they die, and go through that narrow gate to heaven. And in



the fields up there, where mother's waiting for us, they grow, no doubt, larger and finer; and the good thoughts and sweet sayings we've had about her, and the flowers we've planted round her grave, don't all die, but spring up in all their glory to delight and please her in the fields of heaven.'

"'Why, Jim,' says I, 'that's about as good doctrine as ever parson preached. There was a young curate—young curates are flowery, sir—as did something like it, but not quite so good. 'You've solved a mystery to me, my boy. Out of the mouths of babes——'

"'Ah, father,' says he, with a sweet smile, 'I'm going up there soon to look after that garden against you come. I feel very tired like, and weak, and my back does ache so, and my heart goes heavily, thump, thump, thump—as heavily as my crutch along the aisle when people look at me as I go out of church on Sundays.'

"'Jim said no more, sir; that night he went away. He was curled up, with one red spot in his white cheek, early in the morning lying awake, and he woke me. 'Father,' says he, 'I saw mother last night, and she spoke to me the first lines of that old hymn: "Teach me to live."

“Oh, I know that, mother,” said I, “bed and the grave are one to me, for you are there—and now——” then a twitch of pain passed across him and made him open his sweet eyes—oh, so wide, with such a different look from that they ever bore while living! and then it seemed to go, and he turned and kissed my hand, and laid his cheek upon it with a great sigh of relief, and smiled upon me as he went away.

““He sometimes comes again, sir, but he doesn't want a crutch now. He gives me good advice, and when I toll the bell for wicked men I see him looking sad and praying in the dark; but most times he's radiant with love and smiles, as if he had long ago found out the flowers and the fields that grow in the sweet country that lies beyond the grave.””

## CHAPTER VIII.

## SOME WINDOWS IN BOW STREET.

**T**HE three friends sat silent for some time after Scumble had concluded his story. At last, with a sigh, Felix said, "'Tis a great pity that poverty can't be done away with."

Upon which Carew, knocking the ashes from his pipe, arose, and said, with as much of a sneer as he ever allowed himself when any thought of Felix's merited castigation, "Is it not a great pity that the Devil is not banished at once, and that Dr. Cumming's millennium is not here? What cowards we are getting! Why, we *can* banish poverty if we like; we can destroy all its evil and its sad effects; we can make people better and teach them to be wise—if we can manage only to agree on the way to set about it."

"I tell you what," said Scumble, gravely; "I have been poor, and still would be; poverty is a most blessed condition. That poor little chap of

whom I have spoken had the best of it, and has not missed his heaven; whereas I and Carew there——”

“Don’t talk of us, you beggar,” said the author. “We are to be pitied or made much of. ’Tis those rich ones, with their twenty thousand a year, who do nothing; those are the men who will be pinched. Is it not so, Cimabue? Don’t we work with the sweat of our brains, and ought we not to enjoy all that we get?”

“Capital and labour,” said Felix, sententiously.

“Eh! what have we to do with that?” asked Carew. “Whenever a man is stumped in conversation, he cries out something about capital and labour. You, Sir Oracle, what is it? Do you mean to say that we do not labour?”

“Not by any means,” answered his friend Felix; “you labour well, I believe, and to good ends—only you, and such as to whom God has given talent, are rich men, just as rich as those to whom He has given estates of several hundreds a year. And you’ll have more to answer for, I can tell you; for those poor people, who indeed are much to be pitied, who are born to large estates, great duties, a terrible disinclination to fulfil those duties, and a swarm of base sycophants about them, every one

looking out to get money from them, have their hands much more hampered and their brains a good deal more muddled than yours."

"Oh, they have, have they?" laughed Carew. "Hark to him, Cimabue: isn't he rich? Why, the young one is enough to delight a whole gallery-full of pressmen."

"I don't know but what he is right, though, Carew. I know that I would rather be born with a passion for art, and a capacity of earning money by my art, than to an estate of many thousands a year. But, look ye, don't let us talk in this way of apportioning faults. There are faults, grave faults among us, and every day the people—that is, the working people—are getting more and more impatient of them. I've seen that for a long time."

"Ay, and I too," said Carew, looking gravely; "and I am sorry to see that almost universally, save in one or two noble instances, the press blinks the whole question. But the Lords are awake to their danger, and so are the Commons—some of them. They are ready to yield anything at a moment's pressure, not because the demand is just, but because they fear that resistance would lead to an uprising. It seems somewhat absurd to predict a servile insurrection in England, does

it not? and yet, really and truly, I fear that we shall have a bad one unless our laws are amended. But there is one comfort. The English put up with a great deal, and put up with it for a long time. Why, how long ago was it that Horne Tooke cut the ground from under the lawyers, by proving that they did not understand their own language?"

"If they do, they understand more than I do," said Cimabue. "I have just got a lease to my house, and I will be hanged if I comprehend it."

"Yes," continued Carew, "Horne Tooke abundantly proved that he was the victim of non-comprehension on the part of his judges of 'two propositions and a conjunction.' And remember that the judges he convicted were men then and now honoured as lights of the law. There is a sentence of his that I have learned by heart, it is so true and so fitted to warn any one who writes for the public. 'Mankind in general are not aware that words without meaning, or of equivocal meaning, are the everlasting engines of fraud and injustice; and that the *grimgribber* of Westminster Hall is a much more fertile and more formidable source of imposture than the *abracadabra* of magicians.'"

“I should think it was,” said Felix; “but what did he mean by *grimgribber*?”

“His editor makes a note of it; all I can tell you is that Bentham uses it, and that I understand by it a confusing jargon. ‘It may be connected,’ says the editor, ‘with *gramarye*, which is, probably, a corruption of *grimoire*, which signifies a conjuring book, in old French romances, if not the art of necromancy itself.’”

Carew was about to add to this explanation, when Belisarius, who had gone down-stairs to answer a knock, returned with a card.

“By Jingo! twelve o’clock!” said Cimabue, looking at his watch and then at the card; “why, I declare I’ve forgotten my appointment with Lady Boulter. Show her up, Belisarius. Will you excuse me, Mr. Straightways? I have a very sufficient reminiscence of your face, and I can finish it another time.”

“Lucky for our friend,” said Carew, clearing away the pale ale, and hurrying with the pipes behind the screen. “I hope her ladyship won’t smell the tobacco.”

“Bless you, she will not mind it; she looks upon Bohemianism as a natural state for an artist. Here, light this pastille: mingled with the

scent of the tobacco and the smell of the paint, it will form a nice perfume. Good morning; pray come again whenever you have time."

So saying, Mr. Scumble rose and welcomed a charming lady, who was delightfully polite, and whom Carew and Felix saluted respectfully as they passed out.

"Well," said Carew, "how lucky it was that Lady Boulter arrived! I wanted to get away, for I am about to read a play at the Crow Street Theatre, and I've no doubt that you would like to go with me. We have plenty of time: let us stroll down Bow Street, and lounge about Covent Garden for a while."

"Delighted, I am sure," returned Felix, who began to think that he should spend his holidays very pleasantly. "What a capital fellow your friend is!"

"As good as gold," returned Carew: "they are simple honest fellows, the artists, when they are not spoiled by society."

"Spoiled by society?" asked Felix, looking up in wonder: "how can that be?"

"Why, you see, many of them get very much asked out, and give themselves monstrous airs in consequence. In fact, artists are more appreciated



than other men of genius, partly because their works are more easily understood, but chiefly because they come more readily in contact with great people. Now you will see that Lady Boulter will ask Cimabue to one of her soirées, and he, silly fellow, will go."

"Why is he silly, if he likes such company?"

"Because he will be out of place there. Most of the people are stupid, and will stare at him as they would at a tumbler or *saltambanque*, and the others, who are not stupid, are too much engrossed by themselves, and their own fancied importance as big-wigs, to say anything. Besides this, cloth of gold and cloth of frieze don't mix well together."

"I am afraid you are a dreadful democrat," said Felix, with a smile.

"Not a bit of it; a true aristocrat, if our aristocracy were the *Aristoi*, the best and wisest. But, above all these reasons, a man of art has no call to waste his time in these frivolous assemblies which all people hate, and only give just to be in the fashion."

By this time the two friends had reached a street celebrated enough in its way—one of the streets of the world, if there be such. It has its

name every day in the papers, and its court news is of more true interest than that given with such loyal unction by the Court newsmen. It is true this court is a police court; but matters appertaining to life and death are debated therein, and outside the door, beyond the guard of lounging police officers, whose stolidity seems to transcend the most stolid of the British nation, are broken men, dazed and anxious women, parents half maddened with the knowledge that the guilt and shame of their child will anon be published, wives whose red eyes and trembling hands attest the love they have for their fallen husbands, and beyond these the usual motley crowd of hangers-on, *flâneurs*, idlers, people who always have half-an-hour to spend, and prefer to spend it somewhere where their feelings will be touched.

“It’s a wonderful street, this street,” said George Carew, standing opposite the theatre, “and some wonderful people go up and down it. You will observe that it is always sunny, when there is any sun to be seen, and that, lounging up and down and in and out these taverns, you see a tribe of men who are closely shaven, pale, cadaverous-looking, but yet with something of the air of genius about them.”

“Yes; who are they? They are pale enough, to be sure. What fine eyes some of them have, and what lank cheeks!”

“Ay, ay,” continued George, nodding familiarly to one of these gentry. “These are the actors; most of them, too, I fancy, out of work. You see that there are several theatrical agents in this street, persons who are supposed to have great influence with country managers, and who can get young Thespians an engagement with fine pay and all that, at any time in the year. But these agents are, for the most part, fellows who promise much and do little.”

“Mere humbugs,” said Felix, throwing in a word.

“Well, I won’t say that. Some of them are; but, really, the theatrical profession, as its devotees call it, is so poor, so uncertain, and, to the crowd employed, so miserably disappointing, that one cannot wonder at its agents being sad fellows. Why, they send young fellows to learn their art down in the country to a wretched theatre, where the ghost never walks.”

“Ghost never walks! Where they don’t play ‘Hamlet,’ I suppose you mean,” said Felix, rather puzzled, but convinced that he had hit upon the true solution of the difficulty.

“Not a bit of it. Theatrical slang, which I dare say seems very witty to adepts—like all slang, by the way—is essentially stupid to outsiders. Why they use such a phrase, I don’t know, but the ghost’s walk means the payment of their salaries. Does the ghost walk to-night? is a question often asked with the most bitter seriousness and the deepest concern by a heavy tragedian with, it may be, a sick wife and a large family of small children. But, here, don’t let us talk about it: it is true that the profession has large prizes for some people, if they choose to sacrifice time, genius, peace of mind, and reputation too often, to the *métier*, but the realities of the profession are too stern and hard to be spoken of calmly by a man who has feeling. Why, sir, there are men of fifty, first-rate actors, scholars and gentlemen, who can’t get a decent engagement at six pounds a week; no, nor at half that sum.”

“Three hundred a year,” said Felix.

“Ay, if you take the year round,” returned his friend: “but what actor is able to do that? No one. Hallo, Belville, is it you? What are you doing?”

This was addressed to a short brown man, with his face painfully shaven, and not without a certain

dry humour about it, who came up in company with a taller man, also scraped and shaven up to his very ears, and behind and above his ears too.

“Bobbish, my boy,” said Belville. “So you’ve got it out at last, ’ave you? Well, it will be a success, I can tell you.” Mr. Belville was one of those merry, sanguine men, who, enjoying good health and a fine digestion, are in a good humour with the world, and seem determined to make everybody else in a good humour with them and it too. He was always prophesying success to others, and sometimes was not mistaken; he praised everybody, and never said an ill word of any one; so that some people suspected him of being false, or, as they phrased it, a humbug. But Belville really thought that every aspirant would turn out a Kean, and, with considerable appreciation of art, was so good-natured that he let his judgment too often fall asleep.

The tall muscular man, his companion, he introduced to Carew as Tommy Milano, the clown—“the best clown,” he said, “since Grimaldi,” who apparently set the fashion of Italian names, for Mr. Milano was a John Bull to the backbone, and, although he was humorous enough on the stage, with a whitened face and triangular patches on his

cheeks, looked more like a stalwart sporting-man, with bronzed cheek, and a healthy appearance too often foreign to gentlemen of his profession.

"Ain't he lookin' prime, sir?" said Belville. "Ay, he's a wonderful creetcher, he is; been playin' to full 'ouses at Margate, makin' 'is fortune."

"'Old yer tongue, 'Arry Belville," said the clown. "No such luck on the cards; 'ouses pretty good, but we poor fellows don't make fortunes nowadays."

As he spoke, Mr. Milano, as well as Mr. Belville, looked round for applause; and the conscious strut of the one, and the looks of the other, testified that they were quite ready to accept the flattering notice of the urchins and little shop-girls and clerks who pointed them out, with a "There, that's 'im; that's Tom," which was by far too frequent for Felix, who found himself one of four who suddenly became the centre of attraction.

"Well, now," said Mr. Belville, "what's up? Your young friend, sir, 'as a nice face for light comedy. I want a good walking gent, as must be tip-top in 'is wardrobe; and I can promise 'im thirty bob a week."

“Ah, that is not his forte,” said Carew, with a smile.

“Isn’t it, now? Well, p’raps I’m wrong; but now I look, he wouldn’t make a bad first old man, if he was mugged up a bit, you know.”

“Well, when he wants an engagement,” said the author, drawing his friend’s arm within his own, and moving onwards, “I’ll apply to Mr. Harry Belville, theatrical agent. Good morning.”

“Yes, that’s it. I’m sure to fit ’im; I’ve several good jobs on. The old shop, recollect.” And then, lapsing into a momentary forgetfulness of the shop, he asked, with an insinuating smile, “What are you goin’ to stand?”

Carew shook his head good-naturedly, and passed on. “Queer fellows, are they not?” said he, when they were fairly out of ear-shot, and the great Tommy Milano—whom little boys looked at in the expectation that he would spring through one of the shop windows, and then appear at the first floor, with “How are you? Here we are again!” his own familiar greeting—had turned up Crow Court to ascend to Mr. Harry Belville’s offices.

“Well, I don’t feel flattered at being taken for an old man, first or second,” returned Felix;

“and what the dickens did the man mean by being ‘mugged up’?”

“Slang! slang again; the curse of society; a mere shibboleth, which will eventually destroy our language. You must understand that when one’s face is properly set to carry age and character, expression—such as wonder, sorrow, piety, anger—and painted, whitened, reddened, or wrinkled, it is ‘mugged up.’ The phrase may not be known, but the custom is well understood, in all kinds of life. I once knew two men, one a Stock-Exchange man, and the other a gentleman travelling for orders in the wine trade, who made as much in a week as I do in a month. They both used to set their faces for business; the latter gentleman had a peculiar, bland, pleased, cheerful expression quite foreign to the man, but which made his fortune.”

“Surely you are jesting.”

“Not a bit of it,” said Carew; “I study people and speak the truth, even what I see and observe. A friend of mine—indeed, a school and college fellow—is a ritualistic clergyman, and he walks in procession up the aisle of his church, following his acolytes and choristers. Sometimes I go with him into his vestry; and let me tell you that he really sets his face and assumes a pious, beatific



expression, not unlike that found in the works of the Spanish religious painters, which is greatly admired by his congregation. I don't say the man is not earnest, though I know him to be weak and foolish; but I assert positively that he 'mugs himself up' for his holy office, and puts on an expression, just as he puts on the green and gold things which he was the first to assume."

"Oh, dear! oh, dear!" said Felix, with a sigh—for Carew's conversation carried conviction with it—"what a world of masks it is!"

"Right you are," returned Carew, quoting the prevailing slang; "here you can see them all for nothing."

He swung his young friend round suddenly to a shop in which all kinds of masks were to be seen; some grinning horribly, some with terrible and distorted faces, pink eyelids, green eyes, horrent mouths, noses full of pimples, and cheeks of a varied and blossomy character, which was enough to frighten any one into teetotalism—that is, if we suppose the masks to have been of the contrary economy. That ingenious artist Dyk Wynkyn had exhausted his ingenuity in devising these dreadful coverings for the human face divine: some were in the shape of owls, some of bears,

some of dogs; and elephants, pigs, tigers, and lions were not absent.

“Here,” said the author, “is part of the paraphernalia of a pantomime. Paraphernalia is a good word, is it not?”

“You ought to know,” answered Felix; “pretty good, I should think.”

“No, it is not; I hate long and fine words; and, moreover, it does not fit. Head-gear, or head-furniture, would do better. Why we submit to the preliminary nonsense in masks, rhymes without reason, spoken through pasteboard, so as not to be heard, I don’t know. All I can say is that every reasonable man can see a fine opening for a pantomime that should be beautiful and poetic, not nonsensical and monstrous; however, here we are, and there is some of the frippery of the stage.

“Next door, you see,” said Carew, passing onwards, “is the celebrated Mr. March’s shop, the costumier’s. Mr. March can find you dresses for any period in the world’s history, even that of Nebuchadnezzar, when he went on all fours and ate grass; for he has some strange animal dresses. He will dress ‘King John,’ with four hundred super-numeraries, or ‘Box and Cox,’ with only three

characters, and, what is more, will furnish a dozen theatres at once. Here, look at his window. There are some fine shoes and swords: those long lank pink things are what are called tights, literally hose—the calves are ingeniously stuffed with wool: there's a clown's gaberdine next to a king's dress; here a knightly helmet, and there the headpiece of the Iron Mask: here is a bishop's mitre, and there a fool's bauble. Was there ever such a levelling-place in the world? In this window, as in the grave, we lay down all dignities, all paintings, patchings, heraldic devices, great state and titles, and all the lendings of the world. Come away, and see what more can be seen.

“Here is our friend the barber's; you may find all kinds of ‘thatch’ here, as a friend calls it, for any head. There is the wig of a wise judge, there the carrotty poll of the fool; here is Hamlet's light hair, *à la* Mr. Fechter, who is, I apprehend, undoubtedly correct in that; and here the black Charles II. locks, that Mr. Edmund Kean and the crew who copied him used to play it in; here is Jack Sheppard's coiffure, there the beautiful golden chestnut curls of Nell Gwynne—there the short curly ‘Brutus’ of the noblest Roman of

them all. Look at the boys there—how they are devouring the contents of the next window. That is an armourer's?"

"An armourer's? what does he have to do with the theatre?"

"A great deal! Look at those guns—they are absolutely firelocks; it will not do for our purists to arm the troops of Charles II. with the Snider rifle. Then, you see, there are swords of all times—from the double-handed sword of the Templar, worn at the back, to the Spanish rapier of Don Giovanni. Here are daggers galore, and hilts covered with precious stones, or what looks better, imitation, coloured glass with foil. There is a jeweller's farther on, where you can get all sorts of decorations and orders, and whose goods are really remarkable for their work and brilliancy. Beyond that, a little lower down, is a shop specially for lace spangles and ladies, at which you may dress up a fairy, a genie, or one of those gold-and-silver angels who look so glorious in the transformation scene, at a moment's notice. Hallo! what's that?"

"Is that yours, sir?" said a stalwart-looking working man, holding up Carew's silk handkerchief.

"Yes, it is—I will thank you for it."

"I thought so; then you will please come along

with me over the way. The magistrate's sitting, and we will make quick work of this. Come first into this office and enter it in the charge sheet."

The policeman—for such he was, in plain clothes—held tightly grasped by the collar a greasy-looking boy, who had been making free with Carew's handkerchief while he was looking in at the window, and who, in the face of the crowd who assembled to see him, assumed a bold, swaggering expression, as if he were rather than otherwise the hero of the occasion.

"But I didn't feel him do it," said Carew.

"No one would. Look at them flippers." He held up the boy's hands, as soft and as delicate as a lady's. "And whose," he said, "is this little article?" So saying, he held up to the astonished gaze of Felix a square purse worked with beads by his wife, which he very much prized, and which a few moments before he had in his trousers' pocket.

"Why, that is mine! How did he get it? I never felt anything."

"Law bless you—Now just move on, won't yer? What is there to see—He's the cleverest one out. You look so simple, do you see? that he's dodged yer; you didn't feel him, but I saw him; so come along with me, gents, if you please."

CHAPTER IX.

THE POLICE-COURT WINDOW.

**I**T was lucky for our two friends that they had started early, and had yet some time before them, for they were forced to troop off in a motley procession to the police-court.

It was lucky, too, that the passage from the armourer's window, at which our friends lost their property, was not very far from the police-court; for the crowd, which increased every second, would have terribly annoyed and pressed them.

Shrieks from coster-women, "Here, Davy, here's the game 'un's got took;" cries from the wild London Arab to his associate, "Oh my! 'ere, Billy, come 'ere; 'ere's a cove as is in for it;" and the like rang in their ears. One or two people asked plaintively why they didn't let the boy go, and many, who did not and could not understand anything about it, volunteered an explanation to the crowd that surrounded them.

At length, opposite the police magistrate's office our friends found a body of four or five policemen lounging round the door in a half military, half official way, who, when they saw the crowd approach, walked up to the vanguard of boys, pulled off their caps, threw them to a distance, and otherwise, partly playfully and partly with cuffs, dispersed the ragged troop, which immediately re-formed on the flanks of the crowd, and saluted the "bobbies" with cat-calls and chaff.

The diversion made by the police, however, enabled the game 'un and his two accusers safely to enter the sacred precincts wherein justice was administered; and, suddenly passing from the outer light into inner darkness, Felix found himself, for the first time in his life, inside a police court.

It was a queer, dirty place—stone and paint, without any attempt at ornament—when thronged by daily crowds of the poor and miserable, not giving much outward beauty even to the eye of the policemen. Passing through a long passage, and getting a glimpse of barred windows, through which a yard might be seen, surrounded by many little cells, Felix and Carew reached an office, wherein, behind a railed division, sat a young

and good-looking inspector, at a charge-sheet. "Well," said this officer to the policeman in plain clothes, "what! here again; what have you now, Beales?"

It was evident from this that Beales had been there before that morning, and that he was really an active and intelligent officer, as indeed he was, with a complete passion for thief-taking, which he studied by day, and upon which he meditated by night.

"Well," said Beales, drawing in his breath—a habit that he had—and taking a leisurely survey of the office—not that he did not know it, but because he was in the habit of throwing his eyes round every apartment—"well, I've got him at last."

As the criminal, who was nowise disconcerted, was not tall enough to be visible above the official railings, which were about the height of a tall man's chest, Mr. Inspector had risen, with his heels on the crossbar of his office stool, and looked over at the culprit. "Why," said he with a pleased expression, "it's Pip, the game 'un."

"Oh, yes, it's me, hofficer," said Pip: "but don't make no remarks; do your duty. Here's William Beales has bin an' took me; and these two gents



will be cruel enough to go an' swear as how some of their property 'as been found on me." Mr. Pip tried to look like a martyr, but did not succeed; and in a very short time, and in a very business-like way, the charge was made out on the ruled and tabulated charge-sheet, and Mr. William Beales suggested to Pip that his little game was up, because his "flint" would be fixed now.

"You'll be in good time if you make haste," said the inspector, touching a bell and giving to an attendant satellite, in blue with pewter buttons, the charge-sheet. "The night charges were very few, and there is not much before his worship. Will you be so kind, gentlemen, as to follow the policeman?"

Felix, who had felt himself in a perfectly novel situation, which he did not at all like, and who would have been, perhaps, much more glad than Mr. Pip to have "bolted" directly he got out of the police station, here whispered Carew: "Must we prosecute this poor boy? It would be better to lose the purse and the handkerchief, and to let him go. Say something."

"It's of no use," answered his friend; "it would be much *easier* for us to let the thing pass off, but not much *better*. The boy is a

thoroughly accomplished thief, and we may make him better by punishment. Besides, you don't know anything of law; when it once gets you in its clutches you can't possibly escape. We are fixed, I can tell you; let us hope that it won't keep us long."

"I'm sure I hope so," said Felix, gloomily; and then the two friends went out, and, crossing the road, emerged once more into the bright sunshine, where a very large crowd was assembled round a dark omnibus-looking van, and watching the depositing within that van of persons whose cases had been disposed of. But the sunshine lightened them up but for a minute, for they at once entered a building very like the last, somewhat more dirty, and very much more crowded, and with two or three waiting-rooms on the right-hand side of the dirty corridor, into one of which Mr. William Beales, a plain-clothes man, commonly but erroneously called a detective, hurried his prisoner, and told Carew and Felix to wait till he came back.

"I wish we had been a mile off," said Felix; "I'm sure I don't want to convict that unhappy boy; and waiting here will be a bore."

"You will see life, at any rate," rejoined Carew;

and as for waiting, it won't be for long ; for I've tipped the policeman, and he will be here in a minute. I must assure him that I can't afford to lose my appointment, and give him an order for the theatre: these fellows like going to theatres; they combine business and amusement very cunningly there, and, while they are laughing at a farce, may be watching a thief."

So it was that, when the active and efficient officer returned, Mr. Carew arranged with him, that if the young pickpocket could not be at once brought up and dealt with in a summary manner, the case should stand over. But the policeman was a fellow of some energy ; for in a short time he returned—having gone purposely into the court—and told our two friends that their case would be decided after the one then on ; he had in fact spoken to the usher of the court, who had arranged it with some other authority, and he gladly moved the two prosecutors, and a witness, who, being an English *flâneur*, was only too ready to run in and give his evidence, through a stone passage into a frowsy court, full of pews, like a church, in the middle, but with a small space for the public at one side, and a smaller, carpeted and with a tiny library of reference, at the other ; and

thereat sat the magistrate, a shrewd and not an ill-humoured English barrister, who had been grinding away at this work for many years—for so many, indeed, that he believed all the men and women in the world possible rogues, thieves, murderers, and such like, and regarded the people brought before him with a kindly consideration that was quite touching to behold.

It was indeed not without reason that Sir John Chitty was called the worthy magistrate. He had been knighted; not on account of his services, which were many; not on account of his honesty and integrity, his learning and industry, which were great, but for that detestable and inhuman reason which obtains at the English fountain of honour—because, forsooth, some hundred years ago a Bow Street magistrate was knighted by one of our dull German kings, and henceforward a precedent was established. Thus, too, it is the custom to make the Lord Mayor a baronet upon certain auspicious occasions, and we have to put up with a small hereditary nobility, descendants of successful grocers, or timber-dealers, *ad infinitum*, or as long as the august lines will last. Far be it from any one to look down on a grocer or wood-dealer; in their own line they are estimable and excellent, so

long as they don't cheat; but one must most seriously object to the fact that our present nobility is drawn too exclusively from successful grocers, tea-dealers, lawyers, and such people. No wonder that men of letters and men of genius refuse the Queen's favours in that way.

Such were the reflections which Carew made afterwards to Felix, though at present he made none; for directly they entered the fœtid court, which had about it a too prevalent smell of fustian, the usher at the door gave a "hush," and several volunteers "hushed" also; so that Carew and Felix crept like a couple of guilty things towards a kind of pew set aside for reporters, and disappeared in its friendly gloom with much rapidity.

"Hush!" said the usher again.

The trial proceeded, and the court was convulsed with a peculiar merriment, in which Felix could see no fun. This, however, is not to be wondered at; for every observer will have remarked that the jokes of barristers and judges are of the smallest possible size, and that yet reporters tell us that "shouts of laughter" and "great laughter, which was with difficulty suppressed," greet them all. Perhaps the reason of this is, that the horsehair wigs, the solemn shams, and general heaviness of

law cause such a depression that the lightest joke possible is seized on as an excuse for a burst of laughter, which flares up and dies out as suddenly as the fire in a wisp of straw.

“Was it your barrow that she took, then?” asked the magistrate of an obstinate, puzzle-pated Irishman, who seemed to have much delight in his position, and to take possession of the whole court with an Irish love for legal combativeness.

Paddy entered into a rigmarole statement, by which it appeared, or rather from which it was elicited, that he and the accused had bought two barrows, and that the young woman had chosen to take the best, or rather the one upon which he, the Irishman, had set his mind; hence the charge of theft.

Then the accused, a strong coster-girl in a glaring shawl and bonnet, her best—for she had dressed herself as well as she could to appear before the court—made her defence, and produced a sturdy English witness whose testimony cleared her, upon which the magistrate, who had made one or two notes, summed up and gave advice to the people concerned to live peaceably, and dismissed the case, and the accused came down from the bar, and, surrounded by laughing and jeering friends, flocked out of court.

It was a strange sight, and a very novel one to Felix. He was struck with the friendly feeling between the litigants and the magistrate; with the commonplace way in which the oaths were administered, and the want of tremor or of any fear in the accused; with the easy way in which a servant-girl, who next came up, submitted to a charge of theft fully made out; with the carelessness with which she bade good-bye to her weeping mother; and the want of horror with which crime was received by policemen, clerks, audience, and magistrate. Here was one, blasted for life in reputation, setting off on the downward road with a sneer and a smile; in ten or twenty minutes a life was, as Felix well saw, signed away in the report which the clerk wrote upon paper; and, for the paltry loss of a cloak, a fine dress, five shillings, and an old bonnet—how dowdy and contemptible the bundle looked as it was produced and sworn to—a finely-grown, strong, and good-looking girl was made the companion of thieves, and accepted almost with a curtsy the stigma which would last for life. Puzzled and strangely moved, Felix watched the reporter, a gentleman of colour, whose experience taught him only to jot down such cases as would please the public, write down his arbitrary signs,

or, shutting his notebook, talk and laugh with his companion. Everything seemed to pass with the speed of actions in a dream, and he hardly knew where he was when Mr. Pip was produced, popped into the square pew where the servant-girl stood but a moment before, and Mr. Beales the detective stood before the clerk, took the Book, and kissed it with somewhat of a smack, vowing to speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

Pip the game 'un was not very tall, and very little of him was visible above the pew, so that the magistrate bent his head and readjusted his spectacles to bring the prisoner in the right focus.

"I'm here," said Pip: "here I am, your Worshup;" then he looked round with somewhat of the spirit of one who was in an exalted position, and, catching the familiar head of a policeman, nodded. "Nabbed at last, G No. 39," said he.

Pip's was an easy case, and the magistrate listened with polite deference to the very little that Felix and his friend had to say. There the handkerchief and purse were, and even Pip, who attempted with keen wit to cross-question Felix himself, could do nothing. Everything was plain. The game 'un whispered to a grown-up



friend who had somehow got near him, that it was "no go," and indeed a "gooser."

The magistrate looked at the culprit, and then at the clerk. "You're a bad boy," said he, "and have given us much trouble. We shall get rid of you for some time now. Do you know anything of him, Harding?"

Harding the official, who took note of such matters, read from a list: convicted at such a date, stealing from the person, from a shop, from the person again, and so on. Pip nodded and grinned, and did not deny it. In spite of his youth, the boy was an experienced thief.

The magistrate whispered to the clerk, and was about to speak, when Carew rose and asked whether this case was not one for a reformatory; and upon hearing this word Pip's countenance fell. The quick eye of the magistrate noticed it. "They are already crowded, sir, and we want now some one to pay something with the boy. Has he no parents, no friends?"

The lonely little wretch looked round the court with a grin. He with a parent or friend! he disdained such a luxury; kicked and cuffed, moved on, and half starved, in the country and in town, on the streets or on race courses, he, alone and

unaided had kept up an independent war upon the pockets and property of the public.

“No friends, guv’nor,” he said, with some pride. “No, I’m one of the all-alones. Come, give us six months’ ’ard labour.” Then he added, dropping a wink at his acquaintance, and determined to keep up the character of the game ’un, “I’ll do it on my ’ead.”

“The boy,” said Carew, “does not know the nature of crime, your Worship, and should be sent to a reformatory to be taught it. He is healthy, and with plenty of intelligence——”

“Such as it is,” said the magistrate, with a sad smile; “we have no want of intelligence to complain of in his class—rather too much of it. The truth is, that if we send him to a reformatory, we must ask some benevolent person to pay eighteen-pence a week for the time he is there:—for two years.”

Mr. Pip looked blank at this proposal; but he had great faith in the hard-heartedness of the world, and sniggered. “It’s a little fortune,” he said, “guv’nor: no one ’ll do it for a chap like me. You’d better give it me as you did before.”

Felix was not a rich man, and as for Carew he was one of those people who may be said to be

always poor and never rich, always rich and never poor. He had just as much as he wanted, and had indeed an inexhaustible fortune in a brain on which he often called and never called in vain. It is true that every now and then the physician warned him that he was working too hard or "living too fast," spending both brain and energy; but what of that? "The time would come to him which came to all," he said, "and there an end." So that, with the exception of a modest provision which he had made for his family, and which could be only available after his death, he had nothing.

"*Eh bien, mon ami,*" said Carew, bending down to Felix, "I think I'll indulge in a luxury: I'll buy that boy."

"I'll go shares," cried Felix; "it's only ninepence a week; and one would spend as much as that in cigars. Speak out, George, my boy."

George did speak out; and the magistrate, with a kindly glitter about his eyes, was even more courteous to the gentlemen. "There will be a preliminary fee as to entrance," said he; "but I will do myself the pleasure of paying one-fourth of that, and the other fourth shall come from the poor-box. You will go with the officer outside, please, and pay your first instalment, or give your

address ; and I can assure you, gentlemen, that the money will not be thrown away, and that you will never miss it. Good morning."

Then turning to the clerk, he whispered something, and to the disconsolate Pip said, "Through the kindness of the gentlemen whom you have robbed, a kindness which you will one day understand, though you don't now, you will not be taken to prison, but be removed to the House of Detention, there to be talked to by the chaplain, and then on Tuesday next be delivered to the Master of the Reformatory at Redhill, and you will be kept there at instruction and labour for two years."

"Next case!" bawled the crier, while Mr. Beales, adroitly putting his hand in the bar, dock, or wooden pew, picked out young Pip as one would pick out a periwinkle from its shell.

Two years ! Two whole years away from his beloved hunting-grounds in Drury Lane, away from the excitement of being chased by the "Crushers," "Bobbies," or "Bluebottles"; away even from the triumph of being lugged off by a peeler, and exchanging pleasant words with a magistrate the next morning ; away from winter quarters in the House of Correction, and the still more pleasant game of dodging the warders, and

communicating in some ingenious way with his fellow prisoners; all these were dear to Pip the game 'un, and the blow was sudden. It need not therefore surprise our readers to be told that Pip was game no longer, and, when he was removed from the sight of his benefactors and the public, set up a piteous yell, at which the whole court, police and all, laughed.

## CHAPTER X.

IN WHICH FELIX, WITH THE READER, IS INTRODUCED  
TO A "PRACTICABLE" OR STAGE WINDOW.

**W**HEN Felix and his friend came from the dark Avernus of the police-court, they— attracting some little attention for a few dozen steps from the court—wore faces serious enough. But they felt some relief, as if they had done a good action; indeed, each had paid his guinea towards Mr. Pip's further maintenance, and everybody in the court, from the worthy magistrate himself to a sweep who had been found mysteriously concealed in the wrong chimney, and whose case was to be next heard, had been polite to, and interested in them.

"I am sure I don't know why we laughed," said Felix, thinking over and giving himself up to a habit he had of analysing his feelings.

"'Tis a matter of contrast," ejaculated Carew, "this laughter, as well as a sudden feeling of

superiority. We are like that hackneyed sea passenger in Lucretius, who, finding himself on shore, is somewhat delighted to see other people struggling in the waves. Moreover, not to be too ill-natured with regard to mankind—a diabolical mistake, let me tell you, and stupid too, as suggestions of the devil always are—everybody in the court knew that the best that could be done would be done with that boy, and that therefore all his ‘boo-boo-booing’ was utterly out of place and ridiculous; so they laughed.”

Felix again laughed too, as Carew unfolded the reason so plainly, and George, who loved young and simple natures, and in truth was young and simple himself in heart and mind, joined in the laughter.

“Well, you *are* merry, gents,” said a small, bright-looking man who stepped out of a somewhat shabby brougham, and shook hands with Carew; “glad to see laughter anywhere, although I have spent my life in trying to make persons cry, and have only succeeded in making myself melancholy. Tragedy does not pay now-a-days; here is my friend Spindler; he rides in his brougham, and has given me a lift. Tragedy, sir, can’t afford even an omnibus.”

“Glad to see you, Mr. Carew,” said Mr. Spindler, emerging from the brougham and drawing himself up. Then, turning to the coachman, he said, “Stage door at two,” and linked his arm in that of the author; “and what has Sam been saying?” said he, “grumbling as usual?”

“All I said, Spindler, was that tragedy could not keep a brougham, and that comedy—and here I am complimenting you—could. If Garrick were again alive, he would not long hesitate between the laughing and the crying muse.”

“’Spect he never did,” said the comedian; “comedy always drew more money, and money David Garrick loved. People like to be made to laugh, and, the dolts, some of them are ashamed to cry. All I can say, Mr. Garthwaite, is this, that I would rather earn half my salary in tragedy or serio-comedy than I would the whole of it in farce; for I too am an actor.”

“And a very good one too, Spindler,” returned Carew; “though why you and half-a-dozen other comedians will always try to persuade the public that in reality tragedy is their forte, is to me one of the mysteries of your profession.”

“It is simply ridiculous,” said Garthwaite, “although comedy very often treads on the heels



of tragedy; and the reverse is also the case sometimes. The souls of this generation——”

“Using generation in the sense of the playgoers of to-day?” interposed Carew.

“Exactly so—are too frivolous to be filled with a mighty tragic passion for a whole evening. They laugh it away with a farce immediately afterwards—a most inartistic and silly method. Tragedy might be prefaced with a piece of simple comedy, if possible pastoral, accompanied with music. Afterwards let ‘gorgeous tragedy come sweeping by,’ as Milton has it; and that being sufficing, exciting, noble, and full of fine thoughts, let the hearers go home to their beds fancy-bound in grand meditation. That is my idea of play-going; the theatre, under proper control and teaching, might be a grand school.”

“Ay, a good notion too; but surely, Mr. Garthwaite, you pitch your requirements a note too high. People want to be amused in this work-a-day world. When the author, the painter, or the actor thinks only of teaching, he starves, or nearly so. The world is all too full of teachers, and there are so few learners—so very few.”

Chatting thus in friendly mood our two friends with their companions came to the stage-door of

the Crow Street Theatre Royal—they are all royal theatres now-a-days—and the four gentlemen entered, Felix being ushered in by his friend Carew. Passing by a solemn man in a cloth cap, who was carefully finishing the remains of an Irish stew, and who glanced at each one who entered with a significant look, he being the hall porter, the little company stayed for a moment while the porter reached down from a rack a couple of letters for Messrs. Garthwaite and Spindler, and, pulling a string, let them suddenly pass into what the tragedian called the “bowels of the land;” that is, into the back parts of the mimic world, where they found themselves in a kind of visible darkness, feebly lighted by a jet or so of gas, which, while it was a great deal too dull for the eyes, made itself only too apparent to the nostrils. Threading their way amongst scenes and flats, they soon found themselves on the stage, where Felix was quietly deposited at a side-wing to marvel at the strange scene before him.

Bare and grim, and covered with dingy brown holland cloths, the empty theatre yawned, dreadful to the unaccustomed eyes of Felix. The glass drops of the chandelier looked dirty, dull, and dead, like strings of human eyes in the kingdom

of Dahomey; the pit a black gulf crossed with bare forms; the boxes, when they could be peeped into, so many black cupboards; the whole place deserted and solitary, save that the footlights were burning dimly, and in the centre of the stage an iron standard shed a flaring light upon the group gathered together. Under the standard a worn-out and seedy-looking gentleman, the prompter, stood, and, with a manuscript in his hand, furnished words to several ladies and gentlemen who seemed to be much in need of his aid; and these, at certain words—ends of speeches, to which each actor and actress seemed very ready to get—would cross to right or left, and stand in a certain position, generally the wrong one, if one might judge from the stage manager, an excitable person, who every now and then emitted such phrases as these—

“Now, Mrs. Belmore, you are really quite wrong there; a little more pronounced, if you please. ‘Then, Frank, if there is to be no friendship between us, *no confidence, no trust, no LOVE*’—cross to right centre at ‘love,’ if you please——”

“Pray let me do as I like, Mr. Spangles,” the lady returned; “‘no confidence, no trust, no love;’”

this she said in the weakest possible voice, and the *jeune premier*, a stout gentleman of forty-five, grunted out—

“ Oh, well, I do hope you will put a little more fire in it on the stage;” and then, walking up to the lady in the most nonchalant style, he said, “ Love is my cue, I think ?”

“ No confidence, no trust, no love,” echoed the prompter, in a voice which long service in draughty theatres, and many colds caught in the service, had torn to rags.

“ ‘ Oh, Julia,’ continued the tragedian, ‘ how easily you women talk of love! Love is the most ecstatic bliss ’—and so on, I think, Mr. Blackwood, down to ‘ India, adieu ! ’ ”

“ Yes ; but a man don’t go to India in that cool way ; do put a little more life and go into it.”

But life there was none. Every now and then, hearing the magic cue, some one concerned in the piece would dash into the centre, mutter a few words, and then retire. Now and then, but at long and weary intervals, two interlocutors seemed to have studied and to know their parts and give an intelligible reading. The ladies and gentlemen were, moreover, but dingily dressed, not caring, perhaps, to trust fine morning dresses and broad-

cloth to the dirty precincts of the Crow Street Theatre; and, as everything takes some colour from its surroundings, the solemn dinginess of the theatre lent a shabby sombre to the scene, lighted up with the flaring cresset, and exhibited deep and horrid shadows that were melancholy and depressing in the extreme.

“Well, my young philosopher,” said George Carew, coming to his friend and laying his hand upon his shoulder, “what do you think of this gay and festive scene? Is it not entrancing? is it not wonderfully intoxicating? quite a fairy palace, an enchanted bower, is it not?”

“Never saw anything so dull in my life,” said Felix, rubbing his eyes as if he could not quite understand what he saw.

“Why, you are not half awake to its beauties,” answered the author, with a grim humour. “That which you have heard, and which I am afraid you do not appreciate, is one of the most sparkling, brilliant, and witty comedies of the day—a comedy of manners, I can assure you. Mrs. Buckingham, there, is the sweetest actress ever seen on any stage: *vide* the public prints; Mr. Sterndale is, and has been for the last twenty years, the best representative of juvenile tragedy, or high comedy, that we

can produce. I assure you that some of the young fellows of Cambridge, Oxford, or the West End clubs, would think you 'no end of a lucky fellow'—that is their charming phrase—if they knew that you had been behind scenes while Mrs. Buckingham was rehearsing."

"Are you joking, Mr. Carew?" asked Felix, simply.

"Joking!" returned George; "no, Mr. Straightways, I am not: are you? What is it you want? Does not all the light literature of the day, and do not the novels of that popular lecturer, Ernest Brown, assure you that the wildest orgies are carried on behind scenes, and that young men of fortune throw away their gold on this magic ground? The fact is, you are disappointed; you now see for yourself, and the illusion is dispelled."

"I wish people, when they write, would try to convey truth. An immense deal of harm must have been done by those nonsensical novels that pretend to describe life as it is."

"Undoubtedly; but Truth! why, Felix, it is not every man who twirls a pen who can see Truth; think of that, and be charitable to the poor fellows. Perhaps they really do believe that

comic singers are better company than noblemen and gentlemen, and that an actress in plain clothes speaks with all the brilliance and wit of the comedy writer who has racked his brains to produce the mental fireworks she lets off. However, you are under my guidance ; here you see things as they are."

"And surely they are dull enough," said Felix. "Well, I am glad of it ; I like to rub off my illusions."

"Oh, you silly young fellow!" said Carew ; "keep them as long as you can ; believe that every woman is an angel, and every man a patriot. Look here——" The author took his young friend a little forward, and pointed out a cottage window, close, perhaps too close, indeed, to the door, around which roses and honey-suckles appeared to cling in natural and sweet profusion. In colour the "flat" was beautiful, and, indeed, it had been touched in with so masterly a hand that even at the little distance at which the young man stood it looked charming.

"Stand there," whispered Carew, as he "posed" Felix ; "there, now the light shines on it, is it not pretty ? Give your imagination full rein ; fancy yourself amid scenes of rural innocence, miles

away in the country. On the right stretch wide fields of waving corn, to the left there are woodlands and grassy dells, and at the back a trout stream hurries and sparkles down, singing over its pebbly bed, from the spring whence it rises in the blue hills in the far distance. In this cottage, my dear young friend, dwells the gem—no, a gem does not dwell—the beauty, the fairy of this romantic tale. We will call her Phœbe Mayflower. Let me peep through this window; I will open the lattice; yes! there she is.”

Carew spoke so naturally, and described the scene so well, that Felix, having something of the imagination of a poet, found himself carried away, and for the moment believed that some fair girl was within the cottage.

Gently his friend opened the practicable casement and peeped within; then, still keeping up the illusion, he said, “Ah, no! she is not here; let us seek her in the next room;” and, opening the creaking door, drew his friend within. A dim light from a distant jet lighted up the back of the wooden framework on which the canvas was nailed. Part of the door had been painted and turned, and represented a sea-piece with the waves upside down; part of the cottage wall had



been a terrace, interlaced with flowers ; and there were shreds of gold from a pantomimic fairy bower standing near ; and the lattice from which Phœbe May-flower should have looked through was unglazed, and made of rough laths, which, however well they appeared at a distance, were ridiculously unreal when seen too closely. "There," said Carew, laughing ; "now is your illusion destroyed ? Is this dirt, this apparent disorder, this tinsel, at all to your liking ? Take my advice, and don't love the stage nor anything connected with it, except, perhaps, the noblest and the very best actors—and they are such rare birds that I need scarcely warn you against them."

"But," said Felix, "I have heard you speak of Shakspeare as if he were a prophet."

"So he was," returned the author ; "but one may admire the drama without loving the stage, just as one eats a pastry-cook's supper without inquiring too nearly into the ingredients."

Just as Felix was about to answer his friend, the prompter came and told George Carew that everything was ready in the green-room ; and the author then explained to his young friend that, if he were very quiet and sat still, he should hear him read a new comedy, which had been accepted

by the management, and in which Mrs. Buckingham and the other members of the corps dramatic would shortly appear; and, only too glad to see and hear something so novel, Felix hurried away, and found himself quietly seated in a corner, near a sallow young gentleman who employed himself for the most part in sucking the end of his cane.

The green-room of the Crow Street Theatre was large and commodious, with two very large looking-glasses at each end, and stuffed couches or rout-seats around it. But the papering, the hangings, and the gilding were shabby and worn-out; the striped satin of the couches was torn, greasy, and patched; and the carpet from the door to the fire-place was worn bare of pile or worsted by the hasty steps of the tragedians and comedians who came in to glance at themselves just as they were called.

In the centre of the room a table had been placed, and a decanter of water and a glass stood ready for the author, who was supposed to be overwhelmed with a modest thirst when reading his own work. Two candles illuminated the page of genius, as well as the gas lights, which burnt on each side of the looking-glasses, for the benefit

of those who necessarily inspected themselves very frequently therein.

The actors and actresses were seated round the green-room, more than one of them looking at their watches, and expressing a not unnatural wish to be out of the theatre; and the lessee, a middle-aged gentleman with a bald head and a very mild expression in his eyes—neither of which prevented him from being a very queer customer indeed—was sitting down in earnest conversation with Mrs. Buckingham.

“Dear Mr. Carew,” said that lady, stretching out a gloved hand in a very friendly manner, but without rising, “I hear you have a charming part for me. Now I hope I shall not be disappointed.”

“Nor I,” chimed in the second lady. And the rest of the company followed in chorus.

Carew, who was a man of few words, but whose manner was quite as charming as even that of Mrs. Buckingham, bowed politely, and, asserting plainly that he could say nothing of his own play but that Mr. Tottenham the lessee had accepted it, sat down to the table, cleared his voice, and began reading.

It astonished Felix to find how eagerly everybody listened to the parts that he or she knew

would fall to his or her share, and how careless they were of the caustic and clever writing which fell to the share of any other actor or actress. But this was no new thing to George Carew; and as he read very finely, and gave proper emphasis to every point, the comedy—one of modern life—appeared short and satisfactory, full of sharp hits and acute teachings to one person, who happened indeed to be the only one not personally interested in its success.

When the reading was concluded all the actors were silent. Mr. Tottenham, who had good taste, and had himself purchased the play, emitted certain murmurs of applause; then the general company applauded, and finally each actress and actor, Mrs. Buckingham leading off, commenced a series of particular deduction from the general merit of the piece, by which it would appear that the play, which a moment before had been charming and full of wit, was as full of faults as a poor piece well could be. Mrs. Buckingham hinted that her part, which was that of a young lady full of heart and of a romantic nature, opposed to the worldly counsels of her guardian, was not often enough on the stage, although there were very few scenes without her. Mr. Sterndale, the *premier*

*jeune homme*, believed that his part was, on the contrary, the weakest; and the comic gentleman, who represented a bagman in the hardware line, who fell suddenly into a huge fortune—which in the end proved to belong to Edith (Mrs. Buckingham)—asserted that he had not half enough to do or to say.

“Look here, Mr. Carew,” said he, drawing the author skilfully away from the contending great ones. “Let me touch it up, you know; very prime it might be made. Let me get up a steeplechase at Brummagem House—that’s my new park, you know—and come in dressed as a jockey, walking with about four stone round my waist to get my weight down. A running patter up and down the stage, by me and a lot of my fine friends, all ready to eat me up for my money, would be a fine thing.”

“I’ll make a note of it,” said Carew; “and, gentlemen and ladies, I must hurry away down to the office of the *Daily Censor*; if you don’t be good I’ll cut off all dramatic criticism for a fortnight at least. I will make notes of all your suggestions. Good morning.”

“The parts will be copied out and delivered into your hands, ladies and gentlemen,” said the

lessee, "by Monday. We will rehearse the comedy, if you please, on the Wednesday following."

A general chorus of "Oh Mr. Tottenham!" and a reference to study, then broke out amidst the departing company, when the author and his friend withdrew, not without overhearing very vivid expressions from some who held minor characters, that the piece was "rot" *i.e.*, worth just nothing.

"Never mind *them*," said Carew; "they know nothing. An actor knows of the merit of a play about just as much as a publisher does of the merit of a book—and that amounts to little."

"But they pass their lives with plays and playwrights, in reading or producing dramatic works," urged Felix.

"That's just the reason why," said George Carew, as they emerged from the dark theatre and blinked at each other in the broad sunshine. "They have seen plays of which they thought little succeed; plays of which they thought nothing triumph; plays of which they were proud come to grief; and they only wonder, most likely, at the stupidity of the public, and caress their own wisdom more and more. When the public has pronounced its verdict unequivocally, then you

will hear what the actors will say. If the play takes, Mrs. Buckingham will have always prophesied success, and Mr. Templemore will urge that his part was not a line too short nor too long."

"But what about that jockey? just like the fellow's impudence to suggest such folly to an author."

Carew laughed. "Oh my dear innocent young friend," said he; "ever since the days of Le Sage, and that famous scene in 'Gil Blas,' the author has been nothing, the actor something, *in* the theatre. Out of it the world speaks differently. And as for the public, I don't know whether to be angry with or laugh at it. From time immemorial it has suffered comic actors to do anything they like. Farce is always exceptional art, if art at all; Shakspeare was led away by conventionalities, and no doubt put in much against the grain—that is, if his sweet and modest nature ever cared a pin for what he had produced, or for posthumous fame at all. But here am I near to my destination; I shall leave you to find your way home, and hope to meet you at Mr. Scumble's to-morrow. Till then, adieu."

CHAPTER XI.

WHEREIN GEORGE CAREW RELATES HIS EXPERIENCE, AND RETAILS THE SUBSTANCE OF HIS OBSERVATIONS AT A "CHIRURGEON BARBER'S."

**T**HE remainder of the day Felix spent, to his own and his wife's great delight, at home, the nurse having felt "disposed" to take a holiday, and having, with that facility which is not unknown to persons of her class, imagined a dying relative who had sent to say that she could not close her eyes until her dearly beloved friend had come to see her, and that then she should die in peace.

Felix very naturally made the obvious suggestion, that, if the nurse desired her friend to live, she should keep away from her for a few days; but in this his ancient friend did not agree. "How cruel it would be, to be sure, sir," said she, "to keep the poor thing out of her grave!"

Although the "poor thing" was a fiction, there



was true meaning in the nurse's saying. "How curious it is," said Felix to himself, "that these people seem to regard the grave as a friend, and death as a kind of relief!" And in good truth it is the case. It is with very little regard that our poor people look at death. It has no terror to them. In the poor court, with its many inhabitants, where the nurse lived, there was always some one dead; and the old woman herself, who passed her life in bringing some persons into the world and watching while others passed out, had mastered the philosophy of Bacon without his teaching, and regarded one as little as the other.

"Pray let her go," whispered Lotty. "The servant can attend to me. Mary Anne is a very good girl; and it will be quite a relief, I can tell you."

So it was agreed on; and with writing and reading—reading till Lotty fell asleep with a happy smile on her face, utterly regardless of the fine poetry which Felix, in a modulated voice, was trying his utmost to do justice to—the time passed pleasantly enough.

When Lotty awoke, there was the baby to dress, its sweet little hands and its feet to admire, and its beautiful pure eyes, like wood-violets, to

examine. Alas! how soon those eyes will be dimmed with real tears of sorrow, and how soon those little feet may become tired, and those little hands soiled, thought the father. But the mother thought of none of these things, but was full of present joy with her husband and child near her.

The next morning Felix, who was enjoying his holidays immensely, went to sit to Mr. Scumble, and found that artist quite ready to receive him, with the canvas upon which was his partly-finished face on the easel. As it had a red dab under one eye, a forehead of a pink hue, and two staring and unfinished eyes, it presented, said Scumble, such an unfinished appearance that he could not allow the sitter to examine it; this was a wise determination, and one to which the artist adhered firmly.

So, Mr. Cimabue Scumble, humming a tune, and now working at his canvas, now dodging his head from behind his easel to get a better view of the sitter, and with great quickness and yet care, dashing in his work, the two new friends passed a pleasant morning, until Belisarius announced the arrival of their friend Carew, and, at the same time, as a natural consequence, received an order to bring some of Bass's pale ale.

The author entered in good spirits, broke through Cimabue's rule by rushing behind the easel and pronouncing the portrait first-rate, and then sat down to light his pipe.

"Why, George," asked the painter, "what on earth have you been doing with your hair? The back view presents a very accurate representation of a new and stiff blacking-brush."

"Just so," answered Carew, holding out his hand to receive from Belisarius a glass of Bass, clear as amber and covered at the top with cream-coloured foam. "The truth is, I've been worried about my play, teased with some reviews, and, as an anodyne, I have availed myself of my usual resource. I have had my hair cut and my head brushed and shampooed; that, together with the soft and sleepy conversation of the great artist who officiates, generally subdues all irritation."

"Who is the barber who performs such a miraculous cure? He should publish his name, and set up as a curative agent, like the Zouave Jacob."

"You go on with your work; and I, in order to keep your sitter still, (I see he is ready now to jump out of his chair, and destroy his pose, merely to watch a couple of flies or any such silly *délassé*-

ment), will tell you all about it, like the story-telling queen in the 'Arabian Nights.' "

The two friends were equally ready to hear George's pastime; and the last, clearing his throat, and assuming a "narrative voice," spoke as follows:—

"Amongst the innumerable instances of bad taste in youth of both sexes is, I believe," asserted George Carew, "a deep passion for haunting barbers' windows; sadly, too, all of us have had it, owing mostly, it may be, to the wax dummies therein—the celebrated military officers and duchesses, which those stearine *simulacra*, in copper-lace, artificial pearls, and cotton velvet, represent. We sigh about our boyhood's days pretty deeply, like mimics as we are. Would we go back to those days when a wax thing, with glass eyes, a straight nose, nostrils stuffed with red pigment, a feeble mouth, and widely-sown eye-brows, was our ideal—our Lady Clara Vere de Vere, our own sweet one? The supposition is preposterous: let us content ourselves with our state as men, and being fully alive to the dummies. Schoolgirls who are of this class are objectionable; nobody loves them; they have arrived at a debateable time of life, in which, I verily believe, they

rather than otherwise, are unpleasant to themselves. We love girl-babies, and young ladies of nineteen or—say twenty. The intermediate periods offer but silly things, redolent of bread-and-butter, with their fingers clammy and cold with practising the 'Battle of Prague' and Weber's last waltz. One of the loves of the school-girl is, shame be it said, the dummy, the barber's dummy!

"Now, if there be anything utterly objectionable, in a harmless way, to me, it is a big wax doll. If I only knew the Italian artist who made them, I should, probably, assault him. Being a thorough Iconoclast, I hate images of all sorts, but especially of the waxen sort. Madame Tussaud's would be to me a prison; a barber's shop, with its three or five smirking inhabitants, looking as hard as stone in winter, and as soft as lard in summer, I fly from. I agree substantially with those early zealots who burnt the images, especially the waxen dolls. They come too near nature to be pleasant; they are like and unlike, flattering yet insulting; hypocrites, with a fair outside merely, and the inside—what is it?—wool and sawdust.

"The dummy which turns round, and bends her neck fantastically; the dummy which, having

a loose wig, changes the fashion of its hair at least once a month, sometimes, too, being seen naked, and not ashamed—helplessly bald in the early morning; the dummy which has dyed one half of its hair yellow and the other black—these, and other monstrosities, are odious; but the male dummy exceeds them all. Those female effigies have still some paradisiac recollections or associations about them; they are *intended* to represent women. The other effeminate things are not worthy of being men-milliners; they have all the smirking prettiness of Mantilini; their hair exhibits vast culture and attention; their looks are, to say the least of it, very bold; they are guiltless of blushing, and have as little self-conscious modesty as the young men of the day; they are odiously well satisfied with themselves. But, even in these, there are degrees of baseness. The young images are bad enough; but the old ones, wrinkled, not by time, but art, with their wigs sprinkled with grey, and wider and thinner in the 'natural skin' partings, with the same lively, unabashed look as the young ones, and with preternaturally bright eyes—can any one look on them without feeling his choler rise? There was a middle-aged creature of this sort, particularly well

shaven, and blue about the chin, as an actor should be, made up after Charles Kean, with a woman's collar round its waxy neck, a star just under its arm-pit—having, like all dummies, but a short supply of chest—and a scant black cotton-velvet Hamlet cloak on, that was such an insult to the immortal bard that I felt mighty indignant when I saw the shop. And yet I cannot tell you how many young ladies in the neighbourhood were in love with that waxen image which M. Cheveux had set up. The manly intellect of Dash, the soaring eloquence of Blank, the piety and poetry of Asterisk, and the fervid bravery of Stars, were nothing beside the hectic and romantic prettiness of that waxen dummy.

“Barbers,” continued Carew, taking a long draught from some of the pale ale which Belisarius had brought up for him, “are strange creatures. They are supposed—I don't know why, but probably with some justice—to be badly fed, and their clerks are proverbially ill-paid, because they keep none, having a ready-money business. That credit in commerce is ruin, is disproved by barbers: they are paid at once, or—in the case of those bold fellows, whereof Mr. Thackeray was one, who subscribe by the year or quarter for unlimited

hair-clippings—beforehand; and yet no barber ever made a fortune. They are good citizens, and are a mild, gentle, and effeminate race, smelling of a faint compound of smells, over which hair-oil predominates. They are celebrated, too, for always having their hair in good order, and, probably, when young men in a large establishment—say Bruce's, of Bond Street—practise hair-cutting on themselves. They dare not smoke, and seldom drink; when they do, it is weak gin-and-water. If they speculate, they join building societies, which too often fail; when they grow rich, which is only by a rare chance, they live at Clapham, and make an abortive attempt at a military appearance; but in this they are outdone by tailors. When poor, they take to singing-birds, and are clever at breeding canaries, the birds evidently delighting in the soft warmth of the shop and the chatter of the customers. The music of these birds is, perhaps, a Shakespearian relic, for in the Elizabethan times the worn and well-thumbed guitar was as necessary to the barber's shop as a shaving-basin. Douglas Jerrold has represented one of this fraternity as having political feelings, and keeping a barber's chair whence his customers emitted some extraordinary political notions;



but at present few barbers have any : hearing so much on all sides, they are of none, and show best policy in assenting to everything that a customer says."

"Who amongst these gentlemen, who were once hangers-on to a science, and called themselves chirurgeons, introduced the notion that bears' grease made the hair grow?" asked the painter, working away carefully at the portrait of Felix.

"His great name—great for a barber—has perished, but his swindle survives," answered Carew. "All sorts of execrable dodges are undertaken behind those dreadful dummies, to persuade people that hair will grow upon the baldest head. How all of us are deceived at one time by this miserable fallacy, it is humiliating, but necessary, to relate. How the insidious operator introduces his 'Taurus Marrow' and his 'Ursa Major Cream;' how he extols certain 'balms,' and declares that one trial will prove the fact; how beardless boys write to female swindlers, who assert that, for six stamps, they will cause the beard to grow thickly in six weeks—is known to all. How this preparation is applied secretly, and how the smooth chin is nervously watched night

and morning, one can imagine. Of course, Nature is not coaxed out of her way by 'Balm of Moldavia,' nor can a man grow a beard like a muff by bathing his chin in 'Wallachian Wash.' I have said barbers are harmless: not so. Deception by hair-washes and bears' grease is their cardinal sin.

"Let us take a peep into the window of Mr. Wigsby, one of the last of those vestiges of creation who, having a weak faith in bears, goes so far as to keep one, and indeed looks upon him as his stock-in-trade. How so many pots get filled with the fat of so small an animal is a mystery never explained. Mr. Wigsby declares that it is because he is so 'werry fat,' and that grease goes a long way, which assertions, to some extent, are true.

"The quarter in which Mr. Wigsby and his bear reside, was, in good truth, once not only a quarter, but the better half of the town; and Mr. Wigsby himself recollects, with a sigh, in which pride has a struggle with regret, and gets the worst of it, when carriage ladies by the score used to send for him to 'dress their 'air before goin' to court.'

"Those days are passed: days in which we had

dandies and dandizettes, and gentlemen paid such attention to their 'air—and airs, indeed—that sometimes a 'fine 'ead was a fortune to 'em.' Now-a-days the degenerate young fellows, what with having it cut close off behind, and 'letting it grow on their chins quite awful,' says Wigsby, do not pay that attention to the subject which my informant thinks it demands.

“I quite concede Wigsby's premisses, and agree with him in a *nonchalant* way; for I, being fond of having my hair cut and brushed”—here the narrator paused, and passed his hand over the back part of his head, as a proof positive that such was the fact—“manage to get an extra half-hour's brushing and cleansing, and thereby avoid the necessity of having any machinery employed on the outside of my head. In the days of which Mr. Wigsby speaks, I can just remember that beards and moustaches were so scarce that any man who 'sported' one was at once put down as one of three things—things, by the way, which thrive into remarkable vigour and liveliness upon British ground—that is to say, a foreigner, a nobleman, or a swindler. I remember, too, that, in the works of an author whose acute and accurate observation has never been doubted, a handsome

hero will be met with who supported himself in a very respectable position upon a fine head of hair and a beard, to which ornaments he added a pair of moustaches, and who was enabled to marry a lady with a competency, and, if we believe him, to slight and reject 'two countesses and a dowager.'

"Mr. Wigsby is a little, old, shabby man, with a pride in his art, and in a tall, mild son—a good man, and one who has had his trials and worries. Almost all hairdressers, as we have before noticed, are soft, good-natured fellows, as if they were suckled on Balm of Columbia, and tried their milk teeth on somebody's 'Emollient.' Wigsby is extra soft and pliable. He never addresses any one—not even his sweep, I believe—without one 'sir;' and when he is attending to a customer whom he respects, he treats him with as many 'sirs' as Johnson did Boswell and Boswell Johnson.

"Mild as Wigsby is, his son—a young man who once had a hope which budded early and was nipped by the frost—is comparatively milder.

"'He wouldn't 'urt a fly, sir; no, sir. John is as soft as salad oil, sir, and as kind. You can't quarrel with him, sir, nor turn his edge, sir, any

more than you could that of a good razzur, sir. They've all on 'em turned out bad, sir, very bad, sir; boys and girls, and all; and have left me and my fallen fortunes, and hemigrated.'

"Emotion, and nothing more, as we shall at once explain, makes Wigsby ever aspirate anything; he is too mild for the smallest aspiration.

"'Well, sir,' he continued, 'my eldest one—that's Robert, you know—I'll take jest a little from over the right ear, sir—'as gone an bin to Australia, as I well know, 'aving fitted on him hout.' Wigsby breathes hard again. 'Well, I wrote to him, to say that me and his poor mother weren't at all well; and trade was dull, and the Glistener did not move a pot.'

"'The what, Mr. Wigsby?' I inquired.

"'The Glistener, sir—made after the recipe of an eminent physician, Sir Benjamin Bowlers, sir; the 'Air Glistener, sir—warranted to make everybody's 'ead as soft and natural as a child's, sir. You see, sir, when the cares and troubles of this world don't rub your 'air all off, sir, which, as is well known, is a frequent result, why, they turn 'em all rough and wiry like. All old men's 'air is very like wires, sir—I don't know whether you've observed—and blunts the scissors awful. Some on

'em are so hard as they quite flies up in your face when you cuts 'em, and one had need of spectacles, I am sure.'

" 'And the Glistener softens their hair, I suppose ?'

" 'Of course it do,' said Mr. Wigsby—'just a leetle more off behind, I think, sir—and puts a glosch on it, sir, quite a glosch. You know as how it becomes very dull like too, howing '—here he got a little out of breath and caught himself up—'howing, sir, to roots a-perishing, sir. Sir Benjamin, when I gave 'im 'is ten guineas for the Glistener, sir, magnified a root of 'air, sir, a regular bunch of 'em all a-growing together, somethin' like leeks or bamboo-canes, or crab-tree walking-sticks, all knobby all the way up, sir; curus, isn't it, sir ?'

" 'Yes, it is; but how about your son Robert ?'

" 'Oh, sir, he was 'artless—'artless did I say ? he had an 'art, sir, and so says Mrs. Wigsby, his poor mother, and a precious woman, sir—sech a favourite with my greet customers of Russell Square, sir—says she, a-stirring up a pot of the Glistener, sir, she says, "Robert 'as got a 'art, and so 'as a turnip, a cabbage, or a brickbat. He don't take after his father, Wigsby."

““No,” says I, “my dear; neither do he take after his mother.”

““As to his sperrit, Wigsby, he do,” she says. “I was always reckoned a woman of a deal of sperrit, and Robert ’as much the same; but as to his ’art——” But it’s o’ no use repeatin’ to you his mother’s obserwations. Mothers know most of their own children; and when they are indooced to speak bad on ’em, why, bad they must be. Yes, sir, Robert absolutely says that I was an old fool to stay where I was—to come over there and make my fortune; and that he wouldn’t send me an ounce a gold—no, not if he found a nugget as big as St. Paul’s; and that, if I wanted money, I was to sell the bear!’

“Wigsby piped shrilly as he said this, and a lively old canary, which looked knowingly out of his cage, as if he was listening to the old boy singing a plaintive song, which was manifestly the idea the bird had, gave a peculiar chirp, as much as to say, ‘Hallo! that’s a fresh note, Wigsby; try it again.’

“Mr. Wigsby’s scissors trembled so against my left ear, the hair round which he was finishing off, that I, to encourage him, sympathised with him. ‘Sell the bear, indeed!’ said I; ‘where is it?’

"Oh, it's close by, sir; close by. John, draw up the blind, and let the gentleman see our bear. It's one of the sights of the neighbourhood, sir. And when it's been killed, sir, and hung up dead-like by the shop door, sir, with all its insides turned outside, all a-bustin' with fat, sir, we have such a crowd, sir, as one can't pass—specially children, sir. And great ladies, sir, sends their nursemaids all the way, sir, from Peckham and Belgravia to see the bear. Leastways, they did,' said the little man with a sigh, parting my hair with a trembling hand; 'but those days is past.'

"I'll come and finish off the gentleman, father,' said John Wigsby: 'you're agitated, I see.'

"John Wigsby took the soft brush, as soft as the old barber himself, out of his father's hand, and continued the operation; and Wigsby sat down, not without many apologies, and pointed out the caged *Ursa minima* to me.

"If Wigsby was mild, and John milder, the bear reached the superlative degree of mildness. There she lay, blinking at us from a small cage about big enough for a Newfoundland dog, which was rigged up at the end of a yard, in which the unhappy—or happy—animal passed its indolent



existence. So far as I could see, it was suffering from an attack of indigestion; and lay there, doubled up, like the Cornwall lunatic when found by Doctor Bryne, and looking like a small heap of brown mops unfinished and without the handles.

“‘You arn’t afraid, sir?’ said Wigsby, with some grandeur; ‘as for me, sir, I’m used to him, I am.’

“‘Umph!’ said I, looking curiously at him, whilst Wigsby Junior gave a forward brush at my hair; ‘and where does that creature come from?’

“‘The docks, sir,’ said Wigsby; ‘we buys ’em at the docks. Sailors bring ’em over and make pets on ’em aboard ship, sir, and then sells ’em. It breaks their ’arts partin’ with ’em, but Jack ain’t got no room for ’em when ashore, you see, and they eats such a precious lot, they do, sir.’

“‘Ay, and what do you feed them on?’ said I, getting interested; ‘I suppose this individual is the last of a long line?’

“‘Yes, sir,’ said John Wigsby; ‘this is the ninety-ninth bear I’ve had. At number one hundred I stop; the business won’t keep us both, that’s a fact. They eat, sir, four times a day, a huge bowl of rice and molasses; and very fat it

makes them. They are never savage when their bellies is full, and generally good-natured sort o' fellows by the time I gets them. It quite grieves me to kill 'em; we kill 'em and eat 'em too, sir.'

"I looked at the little man with some wonder; could he be a bear slayer and eater? 'Yes,' I said, inquiringly, 'I have heard that bear's hams are good.'

"'Too good for us,' said old Wigsby, with mildness; 'we sell 'em; the paws is beautiful, beautiful, sir, they tell me, and so the bear thinks, for he sucks 'em often enough. No, sir,' he continued, with a sigh, 'we don't eat 'em, nor we don't kill 'em. A Mr. Clayton, sir,' here he mentioned a celebrated artist, 'gives me half-a-sovereign, sir—he used to give me a whole one—to shoot him, sir; he brings his musket, gets as far off as he can, and pop—and the bear is dead. He never wants to shoot twice. Your hat, sir; sixpence, yes, sir, pay in the shop, sir; glad you're so much interested in my bear, sir.' The little man gave his usual sigh, whiffed, with a worn-out hat-brush, a few specks of hair from my coat, and bowed me out of his shop; past the dummies, turning yellow with age and with a faded grandeur; past a small

mean row of pomatum pots, that were dummies, too; and left me to meditate on the existence passed in mean services meanly rewarded, but yet not unillumined with the sunshine of honest duty and true affection."

## CHAPTER XII.

AT A FARM HOUSE—CIMABUE DESCRIBES A HARVEST HOME IN THE MODERN ENGLISH STYLE.



**I** MUST make a note of that barber's residence. Where is it, Carew? I must have my hair cropped even on purpose to inspect the bears. Happily, authors and artists are allowed to do any eccentric thing; and so, if I were to shave my head as smooth as a billiard-ball, or wear a King Charles the Second's wig, it would make little difference. My butcher and my baker would regard me with exactly the same respect as they do now."

"That is with none at all," said Carew, gruffly. "No offence, you know."

"My dear boy," returned the painter, "I am quite aware of the, to me, not unpleasant truth. Butchers and bakers and candlestick-makers have very little respect for any one who is not a Lord

Mayor, or a rich citizen, and no more respect an author than does his own publisher."

"That is *quid pro quo*, Mr. Carew," said Felix, who at a sign from the artist rose and stretched himself with infinite relief. He found sitting tedious, and for the last five minutes had been divided in his mind as to how queens and great people fared when bored by celebrated artists to sit for their portraits.

"Oh no, he means it in sober earnest," returned the author. "When Mr. Murray—he is dead now—paid his £15,000 to Lord Byron for some very noble but some very ragged and contemptible verse, he wondered, no doubt, *why* the public bought his lordship's poems, and regarded the poet not as a deserving person, but as one who by a lucky fluke had succeeded in tickling the public. I should like to write a series of imaginary conversations, from publishers' back parlours, concerning poets and authors. The poet represents himself, to himself and to others, as a very great fellow, with more trouble on his hands and more devilry at his beck and call than most people. He is a Michael Scott, a Faust, a Festus; he is more powerful, sinful, and melancholy than others. The very gods up in heaven hold council about

the poet who down on earth is so distinguished, and who, as he says, is—

‘Dowered with the hate of hate, the scorn of scorn.’

But how do the poet’s friends, or his intimates, or his enemies regard him? Pope represents poets in his day, starving and begging, or stabbing each other for the sake of gain; only able to get out on Sundays, because so poor—

‘Then from the Mint forth stalks the man of rhyme,  
Happy to catch me—just at dinner time.’

And I am sure their publishers think less of them. There is a dead poet who pleaded for the poor, and who died with the love and admiration of the people resting upon him. I won’t mention his name, for I would not lift a dead rose leaf from that sweet memory. But I remember how I was hurt and horrified when a publisher, a just man methinks in trade, showed me an entry in his big ledger: ‘Paid to Mr. — (the poet) £50 which he claims, and which I do *not* owe him. Thank God, I am rid of a rapacious, dishonest man.’

“I hope it was written in rage, and was not meant,” said Felix, who was anxious that his illusions should not disappear.

“On the contrary, the publisher used to show

that entry, and tell his story—by which it appeared that our poet certainly had robbed him—years after his death; and to be just and honest—two great qualities, my boy, which all men should strive to possess—some publishers have been terribly imposed upon by authors.”

“And *vice versâ*, I suppose,” said Felix, anxious to stick up for the honour of the craft.

“Well, I don’t know that. You see, if you strike a debtor and creditor account, you will find that not more than three books out of twelve pay well; of the others, perhaps four more clear their expenses; and on the others the publishers lose. Successful authors must not complain if they are mulcted for the unsuccessful ones.”

“Yes, they must,” said Cimabue. “What a good-natured fellow you are, Carew! absolutely unjust to yourself. Let every tub stand on its own bottom, and publishers be more careful in accepting books, and then those who write good ones will be better paid.”

“Dear me,” interrupted Felix, who had been looking out of window, how it rains!” In truth the rain had set in quietly, unheard by those who were talking, and at the time he spoke a steady downpour was quietly washing the dirty pave-

ment clean, and making the Londoners look gloomy and disgusted as they hurried past, discontented enough with the wet which was cleansing and purifying their city, save when here and there an errand-boy, rejoicing in the opportunity of getting wet and clammy, dashed past at full whistle.

“There will be no leaving just yet,” said Cimabue; “so you will please to stay and have lunch with me. Here, Belisarius, clear the table and bring out the Cheddar and bottled stout; and, gentlemen, sit down and try to make your miserable lives happy.”

Belisarius was quick-handed at his work, and in a few minutes the three friends sat down to a frugal meal. The conversation turned naturally enough upon autumn holidays, and Felix gathered from Cimabue that his holidays were spent chiefly in the pleasant occupation of sketching, and that he went far a-foot into the country on such expeditions.

“You must see life very pleasantly,” said the author. “Do you never make notes of what you see?”

“Oh, yes; notes in my sketch-book and in my diary too.”



"Let us hear some of these," urged Felix; "they will beguile us while the rain lasts, at least if—which I am sure they will—they do not instruct us."

"Yes, Cimabue," said George, only too ready to listen whilst he smoked; "do spin a yarn about something. I and Felix have set our minds upon peeping into other people's windows. Cannot we use your eyes and take a glance at the country?"

"With all my heart," said the good-natured painter, as he jumped up and commenced searching for his note-book. "Oh, here it is. Last summer I was down in Oxfordshire, near the Chiltern Hills, and, having an ambition to contribute a paper to some magazine——"

"They *will* write, these painters," interrupted Carew; "I wonder what they would say if we took to painting."

"I put it down in this form," continued Mr. Scumble, not noticing the interruption; "and here it is, entirely at your service. It has at least this merit, that it has no exaggeration in it. The sketch may be weak, but it is painted from the life;" and without further preface he read thus:—

"Dwellers in London, Birmingham, and Man-

chester, or other manufacturing towns—men whose eyes are feasted upon an endless meal of bricks—denizens of the counting-house, *habitués* of the counter, strollers down Regent Street, people to whom Holloway is the country, Hampstead is mountainous, and Turnham Green a *beau idéal* of rural felicity, would you like to be taken out of the turmoil of a populous city, and, without stirring from your fireside, attend an English Harvest Home? If so, come along with me.

“The first thing you must do is to disabuse your minds of their existing prejudices. You *have* prejudices about harvest homes; you remember certain rural scenes from Hone’s ‘Every Day Book;’ you entertain ideas of English rustics dancing in a Neapolitan way, and with a graceful, agile skip, utterly beyond the powers of our peasants’ calves (we allude to those nearly extinct appendages of their legs), advancing before a loaded waggon, called by Hone a ‘wain,’ and singing a certain refrain about ‘a merry harvest home.’ Besides these fictions, you have dim recollections of the ‘Harvest Home’ in which Mr. Toole, the excellent successor of Mr. Wright, figures at the Adelphi Theatre, where, as a certain Brassy Popjoy, a cockney sportsman, he assumes

a Highland garb, and makes himself supremely and comically ridiculous. You may remember, too, how a real horse and cart, in that play, are produced on the stage to receive three real trusses of straw, supposed, indeed, to be sheaves of wheat; and that, upon driving away, previous to unloading at the wings of the theatre, somebody declares, 'Wool, lad, it be th' lääst löäd.' This must all be forgotten; for the present writer is bound to declare that, in the many harvest homes he has attended, he never met with any one half so vulgar as Brassy Popjoy, nor so interestingly romantic as Madame Celeste; so fat or absurd as Mr. Paul Bedford, or so villainous as the late O. Smith in the same drama, when they used, *sub consule Planco*, to play it together. Alas! those times are gone. A new Adelphi, with new actors, and new faces, and new Adelphi 'screamers,' and real 'hits' assure us that whilst we write we speak not of to-day, but of yesterday.

"Besides, it is not always necessary that the last load should be carried. The harvest is, of course, nearly at an end; but if it suits the convenience of the farmer, the feast may be a few days after or before. Nor do we declare that all harvest homes are like the one we are about to describe; several

farmers dispensing with them altogether, and appearing to think that their people should be always at work, without any relaxation, and that the only rejoicing should be when the money comes home into their pockets.

“Be that as it may; we will, with the reader, go to see one. To that aim we take our places in a railway carriage, and arrive at a certain town—small, cleanly, and cheerful; but, being too late to proceed some few miles into the interior of a pastoral country that night, we make friends with a hospitable landlord, and deliver to the pretty chambermaid—a neat-handed Phillis, with auburn hair, *nez retroussé*, and a charming look of simplicity—our umbrella and carpet-bag. We are Englishmen—we travel with our umbrella. ‘Englishmen,’ writes a lively Parisian, ‘Englishmen sometimes desert their wives, but *never* their umbrellas.’ To which scandal we, a writer of not so lively a turn, reply that Frenchmen marvellously soon get tired of both, and throw them away in a very reprehensible manner.

“No; we are not going to describe the ‘hostelrie;’ it, in fact, is not an ‘hostelrie,’ nor does it belong to those fictitious houses current in the pages of romantic literature. It is marvellously

like Goldsmith's life-pictures; it has a parlour with—

‘A sanded floor, which grits beneath the tread;’

the usual number of Windsor chairs, &c., down-stairs, and a more modern sitting-room up-stairs, with loud carpet and coloured prints to match. It is not an hotel—it is an inn. We prefer inns generally to hotels: we like the sand and the Windsor chairs better than the loud carpet and the stuffed horsehair. We therefore eat our supper, like an Arab in the desert, in the midst of ‘the sand which is under our feet,’ and beg to say that if you read those words quickly, an old joke will be discovered. We insert it here, because a commercial traveller, addicted to his brandy-and-water, and his Bradshaw's ‘Railway Guide,’ repeated it to us, and then sank into silence. It is our opinion that that traveller remained in the room on purpose to retail the joke; for afterwards he is silent, and devours Bradshaw. We, who were attracted there under the idea that he was a character which we hoped to study, are disgusted, and very properly retire to bed.

“Up in the morning early—before the neat-handed Phillis, before the host, before the

snoring commercial gent, who is dreaming Bradshaw—up, in fact, before anybody but a drowsy half-boots half-ostler—up, and with scant breakfast, hoping to astonish your friend by an early visit, away!—far into the country, through the quiet, sleeping town, without even a policeman in its streets. Away! under the old market-place, through the churchyard, glancing at the clock, which is asleep, and has stopped at five and twenty minutes to three. We, perchance, have learnt the reason of that deserted, unrepaired old church. The old sad story—a non-resident vicar, a hard-working but incapable curate, abundant dissenters, and a lost battle about church-rates. The parson, thereon, refuses to wind up the clock, and thus marks his indignation; the people get used to the silent chimes, and perhaps wish the parson and *his* chimes silent too.

“Away we trudge, carpet-bag, constant umbrella, and heavy coat, our companions; past a sluggish, sleeping stream; past a silent water-mill; past roadside public-houses, addicted to early closing; past sleepy cattle and wakeful old crows, who are illustrating the proverb about the early bird catching the worm. The morning itself is heavy, and does not seem quite awake;

there is a thick mist falling; the atmosphere is close, and decidedly not invigorating; presently a puff of wind blows away the mist, and we see a fresh and bold landscape; we are upon rising ground—our way in this journey being like most people's way in life, rather up-hill work. Some few people going to their daily toil are now to be seen; and, halloo! what is this? why, of all things in the world, a country-looking dray, containing a round, fat old man, and four fat barrels of Weller's fine ales—Weller being a noted brewer of that part, and not a creature of Mr. Dickens's brain—walking rather fast, at the rate of four miles per hour at least. We overtake the dray, and draw forth the remark from the sleepy driver, that it is a 'muggy mornin', sir.' We acquiesce, in our usual bland style, and the driver is encouraged to ask whether we will get up and ride—the very thing we wanted. That drayman is a character! We are acquainted with some London individuals of his profession, who chiefly occupy themselves in rolling butts of beer down impossible cellars; but we do not know a country drayman. We fraternise, therefore, at once, and he lays a horsecloth and a clean sack over a barrel, whereupon we deposit our carpet-bag and um-

brella, and in a few moments are, like Bacchus, astride of a cask ; the first thing we venture to remark being that, if our friend ' could shove the mare along a little quicker it would be better.' Our thick-set friend does shove the mare along, into a shambling trot, and away we are.

" Trot, trot, trot ! jog, jog, jog ! astride of a barrel, past fields of outlying wheat, not yet carried ; past barns and homesteads, past hills and uplands, and on to a ridge whence we looked down upon a panorama of ' smiling ' fields. By the way, I use that last adjective at random : *I* never saw a field smile—did you ?

" We talk, of course we talk, and about the topic of the day. There has been a fight in India ; and does not our friend know a man in the Bucks militia ? Was not his friend reviewed the other day in Lord Backstair's park ? and did not that friend read the papers, and retail the conversation of a recruiting sergeant ? ' There be,' he says, ' some main hard fightin' goin' on thereabouts, and there be a many of our men out there. They fights well, sir, they do. Why, the sergeant told us of a man thereaway, o' the name of Davis ; a main bould-'arted man he wor, to be sure.'

" We declare that we have no doubt about it,



and roll forward on our barrel, to catch our friend's talk.

“ ‘Well,’ he continues, ‘this bould-’arted man, I’ve heard tell, was in the Crimyeen war, and arter slewing a great lot o’ Rushuns a ball came and took’d his arms clean off. Lord Raglan so pitied of him—seeing as he was sich a bould-’arted man—that he gets him a pair o’ steel arms made, so that *he could feel hisself all over, like* ; and he was to have a pension o’ four shillings a-day, and the Queen gave him four shillings more ; so that he was a gentleman, like.’

“ ‘But,’ we say, ‘not licensed to bear arms !’

“ The small joke is not heeded.

“ ‘But,’ returns our friend, ‘he couldn’t do nothin’ with hisself without arms, and so he took to drinkin’, and half of his pension was took off ; but he has enough now to live like a gentleman a’most ; and he can feel hisself all over with his steel arms.’

“ Many such legends do we hear before we part with our friend ; but, having ascertained that he goes but a very small part of our way, we leave him half studied, and, bidding him ‘Good morning,’ part from him with a cheery ‘Good-bye.’

“ On we go through a wood, at the top of a long

hill, where the dripping from the trees sounds like a continual rain ; and where the damp smell of rank vegetation puts you in mind of certain swamps in America. Ferns and brambles grow in wild luxuriance on each side of you ; and in the warm autumnal morning the wood reeks again. There are some bad things, no doubt, about London fogs ; but this steam-like atmosphere so forcibly reminds you of agues and cramps, that you at once begin to shiver, and do not get thoroughly warm till you have been out of it at least a mile, which distance brings you to the residence of your friend Fobbles, who, surrounded by his olive branches, is, when you find him, indulging in a very substantial breakfast—a repast at which, answering the dictates of an enormous appetite, and the most pleasing welcome from Mrs. Fobbles you can possibly have, we at once join, and do wonders.

“ Having brought the reader to Fobbles, and just let him peep in at the house, we don't see any reason why we should make Fobbles a character and put him in a book. It must be confessed that it is easy to do so ; but, sacred friendship forbid ! untouched by this pen, all friends of mine are free. Why should I disturb Fobbles and his wife,

and get the name of a desperately satirical creature? Why should I invade the privacy of that charming lady? Why should I drag the innocent young Fobbles into public view, at such a tender age? *Procul, O! procul, &c.*, which means, that I will not do it. Nor will I emulate George Robins, and describe the park-like grounds—the wide-stretching walks—the parterres, gay with flowers of every hue, which surround the mansion. Nay; nor the house itself, with its noble dining-room, in which Fobbles shone to an intensely bright degree, and poured out libations of old Falernian in a manner which did honour to his honest heart. I do not see why I should take an inventory of these people's goods. I am not a fashionable novelist, and therefore do not possess those prying, insolent qualities necessary for such work.

“We will therefore not describe how the day was spent, except to say that, by way of contrast to the jollities of the night, our friend insists upon driving us to a meeting of poor-law guardians of a certain Union, comprising no less than thirty-seven parishes. The ‘Union’ is palatial in its aspect, and far exceeds, in architectural dignity, the place of the Marquis Doolittle, in the same

county. Moreover, the paupers have the same washed-out, colourless appearance which the London paupers have—an appearance strongly contrasting with the rubicund look of the chairman of the board. But there is much more freedom and kindness between the two classes than in town, and the paupers salute “the Board” with no abject cringing; whilst the latter dispenses with the Bumble-kind of dignity which is so often seen with Londoners. Moreover, the master, overseers, and officers of the establishment seem uniformly a better and kinder class of persons than with us; but, at the same, Fobbles, who looks over the diet-table with you, points out an extraordinary fact—viz., that, once admitted to the workhouse, the health and appearance of the pauper improves very much; and also that children of the labourers, under the pauper regimen, grow fatter and stronger. A strange fact, O Fobbles! if, in thy country, the labours of honest industry can only purchase for the labourer and his family a diet less generous than that of the workhouse!

“Home again and to dinner; after which, at half-past six precisely, the supper begins. An old barn, big enough for a country church, forms the supper-chamber; and tables, set in the Roman

fashion, form the three sides of an oblong, between two of which those who serve bring fresh supplies and retire. At the tables are seated nearly one hundred and fifty men, women, and children. At the top place of honour is the host, in his element, but at present obscured by an immense round of beef, which he is carving with wonderful celerity. The tables do not absolutely groan with the weight of the feast, but they very nearly do so; and on all sides rise a din of knife and fork, and a confused joyous gossip, which tell of satisfied eaters and happy hearts. Who would not be happy who indulged in heavy field-work, and had such an opportunity of thoroughly quenching an insatiable and healthy appetite? They come to eat—of course they do; Fobbles would be offended if they did not. He is in his glory now, and cuts away vigorously. We, who only serve certain vegetables, wonder, 'with a foolish face of praise,' at the dexterity of his elbow, and the strength of his arm. Away go large slices of beef—pieces of fat, lean, underdone, or brown, mixed together; away fly the vegetables and plum pudding. He will soon be done now. Ah! what is that vigorous shout in the corner?—has some one cut himself? No; he has plunged into a mutton pie (a huge

affair, which takes in his knife up to the buckhorn), and he finds it good. A dozen plates immediately wait on him ; and the empty dish soon marks the public approval. But another and another is found—indeed, mutton pies and plum puddings are stuck about everywhere ; and the onslaught is continued. In the meantime, Fobbles, who is getting out of breath, is slightly relieved by the diversion ; but such a trifle as a large plate of rich mutton-pie does not keep away our Oxfordshire friends from again tackling the beef. The pie was good ; but the beef—ah ! they ‘ *will* take another plate. Thankee, sir.’

“ You can see Fobbles more plainly now ; he has cut down to the third button of his waistcoat, and, from behind the much-diminished beef, looks benevolently at his guests.

“ ‘ Will old Sarah have some more ? Would Will Flail send up his plate for the third time ?’

“ Will does ; and others yet, and others. At length the last plateful is absorbed, just as two boys rush frantically in for more—alas ! too late. Fobbles throws himself back in his chair, gratified, but exhausted. Let us fancy, then, the plates cleared away, the dishes emptied, and the

guests both *larati et satiati*. The force of eating can no farther go; they are full at last. 'Come, ho! and wake Diana with a hymn.' Singing is to commence; and, grateful to Oxfordshire gullets, the 'strong ale' is to come in.

"'Strong ale!' we say to our neighbour, who, though an old fellow, has been exhibiting the voracity of a young tiger, and seems capable of drinking like an alligator; 'then you have few teetotalers here?'

"'Sum 'un may be,' is the reply; 'but not many now. They had some percessions a few year agone, and I met 'um, and told 'um to beware o' the teapot, and not to scald 'umselves; and since they've not had many.'

"No doubt the victory has been complete; for, behold the strong ale! Mugs are filled with it; it is tasted, and even smelt, in a way which shows that there are *connoisseurs* in that barn; it is pronounced good. Pipes are produced—clean, white specimens, aldermanic in their length of stem, and in no ways resembling the disgusting little black fellows which the gents of London smoke. 'And now, master, give us a song.'

"Fobbles strikes up in a deep voice. It don't strike us that the song had anything to do with

the harvest; it did neither expressly allude to Ceres nor to Bacchus; but it had a rattling good chorus, and, as Fobbles let his hand fall on the oaken table, such a choir of voices joined in that the old rafters rung again. Women, children, maidens, and matrons all sing and feel intensely gratified; but the first chorus is not quite loud enough for the *habitués*. 'Dang it,' they say, 'we had 'un louder last 'ere. Why don't the wimmin open their throats a bit?' Thus adjured, to it we go—'Sing away, crack your voices, lads; 'tis only once a year; sing away for the bare life!'

"The longest chorus must have an end. The applause subsides, and Fobbles, as in duty bound, proposes a toast. A right grateful, good toast it is—such as should be drunk by a master. It is, 'The health of all his people there—of all men, women, and children who have helped him in his harvest.' With corn up to eighty shillings a quarter, harder hearts than that of our friend may feel grateful; but Fobbles *does* do so in right earnest. He tells his people that, without their exertions, he should have nothing; that, if he has directed them, it is yet their labour and their industry which have sown the field and filled the barn; and, warming with his theme, he makes a



manly sensitive speech, and drinks before them like an old Saxon Thane might have done. ‘*Drinkhael! waeshael!*’ was the cry then; so it is now. ‘Your health, my good fellows,’ and ‘Yours, master;’ and down the brown ale goes, merrily, jollily. Ah! who, with such a host, could be a teetotaler?

“Of course there is a response to this—of course Fobbles has his health drunk with three times three. We, who are always very bad hands on such occasions, make a speech on our friend; for it is to be the last time that they will gather round that board, or feast with that master. We say something plain, and, we hope, to the point. We pray that he may find as good friends wherever he goes, and sit down with a hearty ‘God bless him.’ And, after the prayer, the old refrain, which has echoed out at so many feasts, rings and swings up to the rafters—

‘For he’s a jolly good fellow,  
For he’s a jolly good fellow,’ &c.

Ay, so he is—that he is: we wish there were more like him. Another toast—‘Mrs. Fobbles and the children.’ Whereat the women shout, and the men are rapturous. Then comes another

song, intended to be complimentary to the ladies, but rudely satirical—declaratory to the effect that the duties of the wives are to give the husbands

‘Three good meals a-day,  
And let ’um lie warm at night,’

and otherwise representing the husbands as monsters of selfishness. Then the Queen’s health is drunk—‘the good little Queen;’ after which, the evening sets in with a perfect torrent of songs. Some are sentimental, some comic—some, indeed, highly improper; but all are relished by the audience. Parsons seem to be objects of ridicule and aversion; and a certain comic fellow, who sticks a cabbage-leaf in a straw hat, and puts on a pair of spectacles, sings a capital song about ‘Parson Brown’—

‘My father, he stole the Parson’s sheep,  
So we shall have mutton enou’ for a week,’

—which relates how Parson Brown’s sheep was stolen; how the clerical gentleman—probably a Hertfordshire incumbent!—heard the boy singing these two lines; how he bribed the boy to repeat them in church next Sunday, before the congregation; how, tutored by his mother, the boy (after

the parson had prefaced the speech with a declaration that what he was about to say was as true as gospel) substituted a wicked and scandalous tale, which brought the parson to shame, and saved his father from the consequences of stealing the clerical sheep. All this, which conveys but lax morality, is applauded to the skies—or, rather, to the barn roof.

“One of the women next sings. Of course it is a love song. If you were to ask a lady of Timbuctoo, of Kamschatka, or of Peking, to sing a song, she would, like this one present, sing of love:—A lonely damsel is met by a youth, when her

‘Cottage is a long mile away,’

and the youth, being of an engaging disposition and pleasing manners, so entertains her with his discourse that she wishes that her cottage was

‘Seven long mile away.’

That is all. It is neither better nor worse than

‘Will you love me then as now?’

or than any of the fantastical melodies on the subject, which we shall hear to-morrow, from Miss Jones’s voice and piano, in Baker Street.





One in ten,  
One in ten;  
For why should a blockhead have one in ten,  
At Harvest Home?  
*Etc., etc. (the 'roaring out' being continued.)*

“ For prating so long like a book—learned sot,  
Till pudden and dumpling burn to pot,  
Burn to pot,  
Burn to pot;  
Till pudden and dumpling burn to pot.

*Da Capo.*

“ We'll toss off our ale till we cannot stand;  
An' hoigh for the honour of old England,  
Old England,  
Old England;  
And hoigh for the honour of old England!

‘That strain again;’ it certainly came over us like remembered music, or, rather, remembered words. There was a swing about it which betokened a master hand. We had read it somewhere; but, when found, we did not, as *Notes and Queries*, speaking in Cap'n Cuttle's words, adjures, ‘make a note of it.’ Some months afterwards we found it in Dryden's ‘King Arthur.’ It is quoted by Robert Bell in his ‘Songs of the Dramatists,’ and, as he tells us, it is sung by Comus and the peasants. The introduction of Comus, Bell says, is as anomalous as the allusion to tithes. It was

written in 1691, and must have travelled down into Oxfordshire a hundred years ago at least.

“Another, also, with a satirical look at ‘the gentleman from Lunun,’ sings a song which describes the terrors of that place, but of which I only remember a verse and a half. A countryman, who seems to be of Irish extraction, gets up to London and calls on a friend, and relates that—

“He show’d me through streets, lanes, and alleys so grand  
Till my bones were so sore I scarcely could stand;  
He show’d me fine houses, that were built up so high,  
And a man made of stone, reaching up to the sky:  
But the name of those places went out of my brain,  
But one, and they call it sweet Petticoat Lane.

“Convenient to Petticoat Lane there’s a place,  
And as we passed through it we could get no peace;  
The shops were all full of fine clothes, black and blue,  
And the fellows outside nearly tore me in two:  
One pulled me this way, to buy a good frieze,  
Another had a corduroy breeches my size;  
One chap bawled out, when I wouldn’t remain,  
Show him up to the ‘Change in Petticoat Lane.

The moral is, that every one gets terribly served out in London, that it be ‘a main wicked place;’ and no doubt it is. O happy swains of Oxfordshire, if you only knew your felicity!

“Thus the night goes on, till it wears apace.  
A fiddle is produced, the songs being exhausted,

and some rude attempts at dancing, worthy of the figures of Teniers or Ostade, take place. I find one lady, who knows a bit of the polka, and off we go, but are soon floored and cast aside, tumbling, with a great crash, over a board, which, supported on sacks of wheat, forms part of one side of the long table ; besides which, the time for departure draws nigh. There is a shaking of hands and a general break up. The women and boys, many of whom have been asleep, troop off ; and, a cordial ' Good night ' given, the master departs to bed, leaving a few jolly toppers yet in the barn, under the charge of a wakeful head man, who undertakes that they do not carry any pipes away, lest, by some accident, they should set fire to the wheat stacks in returning from ' THE HARVEST HOME. ' ”



## CHAPTER XIII.

IN WHICH FELIX RELATES HIS EXPERIENCE OF AN  
INCURSION TO THE COUNTRY.



HAT would make," said Carew, looking approvingly at the painter, "a very decent article for a London magazine."

"It would serve as 'padding,' as the *Saturday Review* calls it," answered the painter, modestly.

"Umph! the name is not a bad one, but it is too ill-natured. Some of the very best papers and essays form the padding of our magazines, and for them the thoughtful readers buy them, while, no doubt, the serial stories forming the chain or connecting links between each number serve to bind them together. It is a pity that our writers, who live so much in London, deal solely almost with London themes—there is so much matter to be gleaned in the country, and an occasional study therein would save writers from becoming merely

Cockney scribes—a bad fault, of which some critics are only too ready to accuse them.”

“They are too ready to accuse them of anything bad, poor fellows. There seems to me a great want of kindness among critics. It is so easy to be ill-natured.”

“And ill-nature, young one,” answered Carew, looking kindly at Felix, who was the last speaker, “is so often mistaken for smartness. But oh! my dear boy, just think what fine hearts have been pained, and what fine minds rendered morose, by ill-timed censoriousness and vulgar critical assumption; and then, if ever you wield a pen—and young writers easily fall into the employment of critics—you will be kind, and try rather to point out beauties than to espy faults. That old heathen, Horace, who knew more of the critical *métier* than all our new writers put together, lays down a sensible rule enough—not to be offended with a few faults where there be one or two beauties in the page to compensate for them.”

It had not escaped the author's eye, which was a quick one, that during his speech, especially when he alluded to the possibility of Felix wielding a pen, that the young fellow blushed, and it will not astonish the reader that, following up

this tell-tale hint, Carew suggested that, as the rain still fell, it might be as well if Felix added to the amusement of the company—an illustrious one of a painter and an author—by relating something about some window he had peeped into.

Felix blushed somewhat, but answered modestly that he would do what he could. He could tell a story, he said: he had told some when at school.

“Not a few, in one sense, I suppose,” said Carew.

“And therefore he would tell something of his last holiday trip into the country, when he paid a visit to a very honest schoolfellow, ‘a poore persoun of the town,’ who, after a brilliant college career, was, having vacated his fellowship by marriage, vegetating on a college living, and, in a very unclerical way, longing to get into a wider sphere, and of course a larger stipend.”

“Beastly word that!” said Carew; “don’t use it again, Felix: I see it slipped out. By the way, I don’t know that your friend’s fault is at all unclerical. I know many clergy, and a contented one is a somewhat rare animal, I can tell you. Perhaps content is of all virtues the rarest, and surely it is the wisest.”

“Not always,” urged the painter; “it is the discontented man who pushes forward and makes the

great man. A man too easily contented does nothing."

"Nay, that I doubt," said Carew. "Discontent may make a man rich, but it does not make him great. Contented people sometimes grow poor, but they are very blessed; nay, it is not the content after all that impoverishes our friends the Irish. Besides, surely a man may be contented with his farm or property, and yet do all he legitimately can to improve it. If he wants to change it, I should call him discontented."

"Everything depends on the meaning of words," said Scumble, in answer. "No one need dispute with another if the two would agree to define the words they quarrelled about, previous to the battle royal."

"Unless they fell out about the definitions," said Felix, with a smile.

"Bravo! you have me there; and now, as a punishment, tell us your story."

"Shall I quote for the hundred-thousandth time the needy knife-grinder, and tell you that I have none to tell, sir?—no, I will refrain and commence at once. As we pursue our plan of meditating upon windows, let mine be one view, and that a poor one, of 'the Church Window.'

“Far away in the leafy country,” commenced Felix, blushing a little as he spoke—for the young fellow still retained some of his youthful modesty—“where an eternal quiet reigns, and not even the scream of the all-pervading railway is heard, the reader will find the windows I am about to describe.

“When he has crossed a great and celebrated park, celebrated for unfortunate crime, and crime most successful and cunning, and therefore rewarded in this world, he will come upon the deserted high-road which leads to the village wherein the church, decorated by this window, is situated.

“The park is full of soft thin grass, softer than a velvet carpet, and old trees—memorial trees, which have figured for hundreds of years in the leases of the grand estate, and amid which are built up lodges, wherein the keeper will hide to take aim at the stag of prime, or to shoot the pricket as he dashes past with his eye so full of life, his frontlet raised high, and nostril dilated with the sweet breath of life; for does not my lord duke wish to return certain members for his borough, closely adjacent to the once royal park, and will not many a fawn and many a head of deer have to

fall and to be carried round to certain tenantry and voters as presents from the duke?

“Far away the lovely landscape stretches over hill and dale, where clumps of trees are set in order like regiments of soldiers in a great battle, and where battalions of oaks seem marching up in double-quick time to the relief of a few mixed squadrons of beech and elm which are somewhat hotly engaged. The deer and fawns lift up their antlered or unhorned heads, and gaze at the passers-by.

“Now these passers-by,” said Felix, “you will understand, are I and my friend the parson.”

“Of course,” grunted Carew; “we quite know that. Go on.”

“Past many a sweet dell, and over a bridge which spans a large artificial lake they journey, till they pass out of the great duke’s park into a close copse, where the rabbits fly, startled, to their holes, and the pheasant rises whirring from the bracken. And then they cross again the winding coach-road, and over a common where the turf has been cut by peasants, and stands packed to dry like so many soldiers’ huts, dwarfed indeed, but looking bigger in the autumn twilight.

“We are now in the village of Stretton Longa;

rightly indeed called *long*,' said the parson to the other traveller.

“ ‘Wide was his cure, the houses far asunder,’ ejaculated his guest, with a quotation. ‘Far enough apart, and but poorly inhabited.’

“ So it seemed. Little fellows with their skins burnt brown, and their flaxen hair bleached, came out to look at the stranger who passed by. The boys gave a slow pull at their forelocks, and the girls dropped a curtsy. Then the two friends leapt a dwarf stile, and passed over one or two fields with stone fences, and came to the back of a churchyard.

“ ‘A quaint old church,’ said the guest; ‘early English, I suppose?’

“ ‘Yes; it dates back to the time of Henry III. Stretton Magna, Parva, and Longa must have been populous villages then; but the long wars which ensued, and the making of that big park, and, perhaps, the superior attractions of trade and manufactures, have rendered our population thin and sparse.’

“ The speaker sighed as he said this. He was a clergyman who wished for a larger sphere, and hoped to work and do good, perhaps, in a town——”

“ You said that before, in your prefatory

matter," interrupted Carew, critically. Felix did not heed him, but went on.

"Or, it may be, in the chief city itself, where he could grapple with the questions of the day, with sin and sorrow brought face to face with him. But Providence had ordained it otherwise; and here, in this quiet village, without, as he said, hardly one of his congregation who could understand him, he was bound to wear out the best portion of his life in his little daily round of duties—duties which he thought insignificant. He had a busy brain and literary tastes; had been a Fellow of his college, and had published a volume of poems, as well as one of sermons.

"‘You must not think that none can understand you,’ said his friend. ‘Of course, no man—at least, not every man—fully appreciates his own position; and perhaps the greatest cause of misery in this world is the non-realisation of our exact place and duties. A man highly educated may feel lost in a village like this; but, if he remember that education is entirely for *himself* (in one view of it)—that it is to strengthen, uphold, and widen his mind, as well as to help him to perform his duties to the world; he will not repine. How many men, wearied and worn with London



work, tired to death with trying to mow down the ever-growing crop of tares and thistles which the devil sows, would be glad to exchange for a time with you this sweet security of peace and calm retirement!

“‘Ah! the key is in the west door,’ said the parson. And then he added, with a sigh, ‘It’s all very well, but you don’t know what it is to live amongst the Bootians.’

“‘Touch some of the young ones; fit them to go abroad in the world and work.’

“‘To go abroad in the world and frighten the crows; that is what they do with their boys down here. You hardly can realise how the narrow means of poverty tie down our agriculturists. Perhaps it is best so. What else could so well fit them for their sorry lives as being hardened at the beginning? But come, we must not talk like this; we must be content, in church at least. I want you to see our west window.’

“So saying, my old friend and schoolfellow entered the little old church, which was very dry and very white inside, with an old open roof, whitewashed, of course, and plastered up so as to prevent the cold wind from blowing down on the heads of the congregation. The little chancel,

within which was a dilapidated communion-table, covered with a decent cloth—then turned up—boasted of two chairs, although the parson never had any help, but went boldly through the whole service with a painful idea of monotony; and two or three dwarf forms on each side showed where the little boys and girls sat, and shuffled, and yawned the sermon through, under the superintendence of my friend's wife, a lady born and bred, and fitted for society, and who, to say the truth, took very unwillingly to her part of the bargain of life. When we were in the church, she came up and shook hands with the visitor, and welcomed him.

“‘I am come to make everything neat,’ said she, turning down the communion-cloth: ‘at least, as neat as it can be. Is not the church dilapidated?’

“‘Well, it is rather naked,’ said the person appealed to; ‘cannot you make your parishioners subscribe to renovating it? Is it not shameful to have a church in this state? Surely some one ought to take care of God's house;’ then seeking for something more cheerful to say, he asked, ‘and pray, Mrs. Courtenay, which is your pew—this, I suppose?’

“‘Oh, no,’ said the lady. ‘By the way, I wish you could, with due reverence, wear hats as we wear bonnets——’

“‘Because of the angels,’ interrupted the clergyman, with a little bit of clerical learning. ‘Don’t you see, my dear? because the angels—messengers or missionary preachers—should not be distracted by the beautiful faces and glorious hair, and, no doubt, gorgeous head-ornaments, of some of their hearers.’

“‘Don’t I know?—of course I do. Have you not often explained it before? No, Mr. Straightways, that is not our pew; that belongs to the Honourable Colonel Vavassor, the late duke’s brother—he was then earl only; and this next pew, comfortably lined with baize, belongs to the servants of the great house. So I go and sit among the boys and girls; on the whole, I prefer the girls, because, although they do sing dreadfully out of tune, and in a pitch excruciatingly high, yet they are not so dreadfully *smelly* as are the boys, especially in summer-time, when the afternoons are close and warm.’

“‘Poor lady! educated for a society in which Italian music, French dresses, and the finest English perfumes were a necessity, no wonder she

found the new corduroy and fustian trousers of the little ploughboys 'smelly.'

"The guest smiled, as he thought this over, sadly enough, but he answered cheerily, 'Well, I shall sit in the free seats to-morrow; I fancy one is as near heaven there as in the finest pew in Christendom. Why, Courtenay, what a fine old font you have! why do not the Vavassors restore this church? What a little jewel it would be!'

"'Why did you not say *bijou*?' said Mrs. Courtenay, with a smile.

"'Because I prefer my own language to French, as infinitely more expressive, and because, moreover, I would not use that fine-lady term to a church, however decorated. There is a fitness in things.'

"'Yes, so there is, and a fitness *for* things in some men and families; so, if you knew the Vavassors, you would not ask why they do not repair the church. There, that is their doing, and that is about all we shall get from them.'

"Mrs. Courtenay pointed to the west window, in which three pallid saints, each with his golden aureole floating in a circular ring above his head, stood long, thin, and angular, and with their eyes

cast up, as if praying for the souls of the deceased Vavassors, three of whom the window was erected to commemorate.

“‘Yes,’ said the guest, ‘these windows are fashionable now, and are happily contrived a double debt to pay; they ornament the church, and they serve for a splendid monument—splendid, indeed, for they shine with more than the brilliancy of gold or of the Tyrian dye—of certain of our deceased. Does not this remind you of Keats’s “casement high and triple-arch’d,” wherein were panes—

“Innumerable of stains and splendid dyes,  
As are the tiger-moth’s deep damask wings;  
And in the midst, ’mong thousand heraldries,  
And twilight saints, and dim emblazonings,  
A shielded scutcheon blush’d with blood of queens  
and kings”?’

“‘Yes, it does,’ answered the lady. ‘And how do you like the window?’

“‘It seems out of place in this bare old church,’ interposed the Rev. Mr. Courtenay; “too much like a great blazing carbuncle and gold brooch stuck in the stomacher of a plain and godly Quakeress.’

“‘Yes,’ mused his friend; ‘not a bad simile;

not quite suited to us ;' and then he put by the question with a sudden excursus into family history. 'There is the dragon's head erased of the Vavassors ; three of them ; sable, on a field gules ; a simple shield, a fine old family. Pride even survives the grave.'

"'Oh, no, it does not,' said the parson. 'You see the people who put up that window are not buried yet. For those who sleep below reckon little whether the simulance of twilight saints are praying over them, or the sea-wind sweeps and moans above the liquid and motive grave which holds them in a perpetual state of ebb and flood till the judgment day.'

"'I should like to die at sea,' said the lady.

"'So should not I,' answered the guest ; 'give me the firm warm mother earth, and let not my bones be washed white, and my flesh devoured by strange fishes. Let me resolve into my native elements, the ever-fecund, all-producing red loam of which Adam was made.'

"'I remember,' said the parson, with a smile—for he was about to reprove the hyperbole of his guest——"

"Very properly so, too," interrupted George

Carow ; " how could you utter so poetical a wish : to please Mrs. Courtenay, I suppose ? "

" " When I was out with a reading party at Cromer—it is very cold there on the coast, but very quiet—that the body of a poor sailor who was drowned was washed ashore, and it was covered with thousands of shrimps and prawns. "

" " Horrid ! " said the lady ; " I shall never eat them again. "

" " Well, " answered her husband, " you see that is one of the ways in which we get back to the bosom of our common mother. We are resolved in various ways into our elements by the wonderful chemistry of nature. "

" " To change the subject, Mr. Straightways, " said the lady, " and to get back to our coat-armour and saints, these Vavassors are not *the* Vavassors, you must know. Our family, the Courtenays, are much older than they are, and my family, the Jolliffes, are older still. You see the old grandfather was a Brownjohn, a London merchant, who took the name of Vavassor ; and so much for their coat-armour. "

" " Oh, vanity of vanities ! " said the guest. " And now, since you ask me, I must say that I don't think much of their saints. I believe that

the angular treatment is false and not pretty, that the art is not an art but a manufacture, that the step is retrogressive——’”

“Bravo, and spoken like a true artist, Mr. Straightways,” said Cimabue, with enthusiasm. “If we do have painted windows, we should have a style of our own, and not copy the old ones.”

Felix continued: “and that Saints Paul and Barnabas up there would have demurred to their elevation, especially as they did, and that loudly, and coupling their ejaculations with manual force, object to being worshipped while in the flesh. Moreover, these windows exclude the light, and force passages of arms and disputation upon us that lead to nothing. If you will have a painted window, fill it with holy sentences and scrolls properly disposed, but then only put it in the chancel, say, where they want colour. Here, in this open country, with the blue or sunny sky without, and the trees waving their green branches in the summer, or frosted and snow-laden in winter, what want we of mediæval saints and questionable coats of arms? Have you read that capital little poem of the ‘Painted Window,’ Mrs. Courtenay, in which the poet complains that the heavens now ‘are darkened by each intercepting saint’?”



That's a fine Protestant thought, is it not? Again, he says that in church the dreaming boy could watch the changing sky, and think of God's power—the window

“ — with the splendour  
Of heaven's radiance lit—  
A window beautiful indeed,  
For God had painted it!”

Finally, the poet refuses, and I think rightly, upon this subject of adornment, to look up to painted saints, or, as he says—

“To bound my soul's perceptions  
By their humanity!  
To gaze upon God's sainted  
Where God was wont to be!”

The thought is very logical and close, and Mr. Sawyer's poem deserves study by all who think upon this ever-recurring question.

“‘Yes, yes,’ said Mrs. Courtenay, ‘you shall lend me the book, and I'll read it; or, better still, you shall read it aloud. But we catch cold here, and tea is ready. Come and look at our study window, and you and I will debate the matter while Herbert writes his sermon.’

“And so the friends went to tea, and at no late

hour, after short family prayers, to bed, in which the guest's dreams were troubled with the wan and worn-looking old church — not unlike its mother of England, troubled and beaten within and without—and the new gorgeous stained window full of coat-armour and saints.”

## CHAPTER XIV.

IN WHICH THE FRIENDS RESORT TO DINNER.

**I**N the best book which he has written— at least it is so in many respects—Mr. Thackeray, describing the warm criticism which F. Bayham produces in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, on the paintings of his friends, hints that it was somewhat too warm. Thus, when Clive gets his pictures exhibited for the first time—not his grand historical picture, but his simple sketches—F. B. shouts, *To triumphe!* so loudly that all the world is made aware of the fact that Mr. Clive Newcome has got an admiring, if not a judicious friend, at his back. “F. Bayham’s criticism on this performance,” says the amiable satirist, surely writing of himself, for he had been educated as an artist, and had worked as an art critic, “it need not be said, was tremendous. Since the days of Michael Angelo you would have thought there never had been such drawings. In

fact, F. B., as some other critics do, clapped his friends so boisterously on the back, and trumpeted their merits with such prodigious energy, as to make his friends themselves somewhat uneasy."

The gentlemen to whom Felix related his first little essay were as warm, but more judicious critics than that good-natured Irishman, Frederic Bayham, Esq. "'Pon my word," said Carew, pulling down one end of his moustache, "yours is a very pretty modest style, young fellow, and I know one or two publishers who ought to be ready to give you some money for your little amusements in that way. But I shall not encourage you. Don't turn author by profession. 'Tis an ignoble career for many of us."

"You ought not to say so," said Felix, firing up; "you, who have carried comfort, manly advice, honest thought, and religion without cant, into so many houses."

"Bravo! very much bravo!" echoed Scumble; "no profession *can* be ignoble that is nobly carried on. It is part of George's cant that he says so—not his own cant, but professional cant, which he has caught up and does not know how to get rid of. I wish he would not try to pass it off upon us, that's all."

“Truly it would be better,” returned Felix; “only allow me to say that our friend has really none of that quality about him. What it is is this: he has a quantity of humility inherent in him which *will* break out. He does not let it evaporate out at the proper place, and therefore he vents it out of place now and then upon us.”

“Do as you like with me, gentlemen; the rain has ceased, and I can escape from you,” said the author.

“And the time *has* passed; it is five o'clock!” said Felix, with wonderment; “I must run home and have tea.”

“Tea! why, we have not dined. Just take a cup with your wife and come back to my study. Wash and adorn yourself by putting on a clean collar; for a publisher has paid me some money for a second edition, and I am determined to stand treat. Come down to the Strand, you two, and we will have a little dinner, *chez* our German friend, Herr Kilner.”

All the endeavours of Felix could not persuade Carew to forego his treat. George was one of those who, having made up their mind to anything, keep rigidly to it, and he took a pleasure in the

society of Felix, and was glad to have him of his company. No wonder, then, that the latter yielded, and that in due time the three friends found themselves in the Strand, at the hospitable house of Mr. Kilner, a house which never refuses its harbour, and a very comfortable one it is, to people who have money to pay for it.

There are eating-houses in London in galore—plenty of houses to eat at, but little thereat to eat, if we credit some grumblers. There is the low eating-house, which has always an abundance of steam about it, and which boasts a great deal of pudding and vegetable, but very little meat; one of the mysteries of this class of house being that the mutton bone, denuded of all the meat, which lies a ghastly object in the pewter dish, apparently projects as much steam as does the huge joint of beef which is formed of a dozen layers of fat and lean cunningly skewered together, and which is never seen by any chance at a gentleman's table, but always on the counter of a cook-shop.

Before the windows of such an eating-house as this, hungry boys are seen flattening their turn-up and low-bred noses, poor things! against the glass, apparently with but one desire in the world,

which is, to be able to walk in and eat as much pudding as their elastic stomachs can contain. When the careful but too generous mechanic hurries to this shop about half-past twelve o'clock, he finds a little crowd of these children around the windows, and most likely relieves them, unless, indeed, he remembers that the boys are *habitués* of the grating, and gain their living by their hungry looks. Some of these restaurants tempt their customers by extraordinary advertisements. "A loaf of bread and a plate of leg-of-beef soup for fourpence," are freely offered; and one proprietor gravely assures the public, in the most conspicuous type, that he will give the "Best dinner in London for ninepence." Not far from this enterprising man is one who offers the "Acre dinner for eightpence;" for which small sum the less fastidious mechanics of somewhat small appetites may delight in a plate of meat, vegetables, pudding, and bread.

"Time was," said Carew, pointing out these places, with the cruel intention, as Felix averred, of taking away the appetites of his two friends, "when eightpence would have bought a large dinner in Long Acre for two authors. Dr. Johnson, indeed, learned to live on fourpence-half-

penny a day ; and do you recollect that famous dinner in the cellar—for they cooked and ate in cellars then—of Strap and Roderick Random, and, moreover, the smoking ox cheek from the eating-house over the way, of Beau Sibbs, in Goldsmith's *Essays*?"

"Ay!" said Felix, "how delighted one is, when hungry, to call up visions of those feasts of which literature is only too full, from the suppers of Lucullus, given in the Apollo chamber, and those wild orgies described in Juvenal and Persius, to the little dinner at the Summins's, described so well by Thackeray."

"Who knew how to feed," added Carew. "You have forgotten the feasts in Homer. The old boys knew that they must live to eat, though they did feed in rather a rough style."

"The feast which pleases me the best of all," said the artist, "is that grand one in the island of Barataria, in which poor Sancho's appetite is teased by a hundred dainties of which he is not allowed to taste one. Imagine, if you can," continued Scumble, laughing, "one's own state under the same circumstances."

"He admires that episode," urged George Carew, "because in a score of Academy exhibitions



he has seen it painted. But I confess it is a rich scene which can scarcely be done justice to. Poor Sancho, after having been denied fruit and fish, fixes on a dish of roast partridges, which he fancies can do him no manner of harm. 'Hold!' cries the doctor, 'my lord governor shall not eat them while I live to prevent it.' 'Why not?' cries Sancho. 'Because,' rattles the doctor, 'our great Northern star of medicine, Hippocrates, says, "*Omnis saturatio mala, perdicis autem pessima,*"' and away the partridges fly."

"But partridges were not for him," said Felix, taking up the theme, and, fresh from the Quixote, thereby enabled to compete with the extensive memory of George Carew. "He was not disappointed so much by their loss as of that of the olla-podrida. 'What think you, master doctor,' cries he, 'of that huge dish smoking hot, which I take to be an olla-podrida? for among the many things contained in that mass I may be sure to light upon something toothsome.'"

"A good sentiment," said George, "like that of the Scotsman, who said a sheep's head was a confused mass of good eating. What says the governor to the olla-podrida, young one? you have it all at your fingers' ends."

“‘*Absit!*’ cries the doctor, ‘far be such a thought from us! Olla-podrida! there is no worse dish in the world; leave them to prebends and rectors of colleges, or lusty feeders at country weddings; but let them not be seen on the tables of governors.’”

“Ah, what rich humour Cervantes had!” interrupted Carew; “how gentle and how genial too. We laugh at the passages now, but let us imagine the writer in his gloomy prison, shattered in health, neglected, with little hope, and with two grim companions, old age and poverty, and we shall the better appreciate the noble heroism of the man. But, hallo! here we are at Herr Kilner’s, and in capital time. At six o’clock he has a fresh relay of hot joints; let us enter, and may good digestion wait on appetite.”

An officious waiter who knew Carew took the small party under his immediate protection, and ushered them at once to a small reserved table which was made gay by the most neatly folded and snowy of napkins, and the most rosy pink of hock glasses. Carew called for the *carte* and studied it, and resolved to commence, after consultation with his own mind, with clear soup, to be followed by salmon, and accompanied with still hock.

In the meantime, Felix had leisure to study the room.

Our guests had entered by a wide side-door way, in which were fresh evergreens; but Kilner's establishment was plainly attached to a public-house or tavern. It may be that the ingenious German, finding many come to his house to dine, had supplemented the tavern by building a big room over a stable yard, and supplying the few guests he had. But, having done this thoroughly well, his business had increased until a second saloon, and a smoking-room all gaily set out, but somewhat close and stuffy, were hardly enough to contain the diners, eaters, and even the *viveurs* who came down expressly to have a good dinner.

Lighted by a lantern at the top, the sides of the square saloon were covered with large pictures by third-rate painters, which Kilner had evidently picked up cheaply, but which were very much better than the ordinary paintings seen in the houses of rich men. In the middle of the room stood a sturdy carver, stout but pale, as if all ruddiness had been steamed out of him, and before him, on a dinner-wagon, a small table on wheels, almost as large as a dinner plate, was a handsome plated dish-cover, under which smoked a fine

sirloin of beef. When any of the *convives* desired some of this joint, the table was wheeled to his side, and the carver, with the artistic ease which only long practice can give, cut him his portion as deftly as if he understood how much he could eat to a grain.

“You will observe,” said George, “how clever the fellow is. There is great art in carving; that is why our young men will not undertake it. But you should have seen my dad, sir; he was an English gentleman, of the time when a gentleman sat at the head of his table and served his guests; not when you dine *à la Russe*, and a waiter rushes up with a joint of a fowl badly prepared and half cold, and with all the toothsome-ness evaporated. Give me the old school. A man should sit at the head of his table. I don’t know what the present age is coming to; it is abdicating all its duties, and will bring us to a pretty pass at last.”

“Bother the present age, you old fogey, you,” said Scumble, who had been making furtive attacks on his bread. “Here comes the clear soup; say your grace to yourself, and fall to.”

Before the salmon was despatched, a young gentleman of six-and-twenty came into the room, whom Carew summoned at once by knocking so

sharply on the table that all the *convives* looked up. For at Kilner's silence is respectfully demanded, and, with the exception of a low buzz and a laugh from some of the young fellows when the wine is not only good—that it always is—but abundant, one might fancy that they were dining alone.

When this young gentleman saw George, he rushed to him, and shook him by the hand with that warmth of feeling which almost all Carew's friends exhibited towards him, and, Carew having pressed him, he took up the fourth and empty chair and joined the party, absorbing so much of his friend's attention and conversation that Felix began to feel a little jealous.

"Now," said Carew, "I am happy. You're just the fellow I wanted, Corner; I think I have introduced you to Scumble before."

"Oh yes," said the stranger. "Mr. Scumble, the artist whose works I so often see noticed in the papers?"

"Exactly," rejoined Carew, as the two shook hands; "and a better fellow does not exist in the world, except he sits there."

He pointed out Felix, who blushed and sniggered with his usual superabundant modesty.

“Let me introduce you two; you ought to like each other, and will do so.”

“We have evidently a point of attraction in you, George,” said the stranger, reading in the open eyes of Felix the friendship that he felt, and liking the young man before he knew him. “I have no doubt that I and your friend will be delighted with each other if you say——”

“Cease your funning; here comes your clear soup. Mr. Felix Straightways, as you are the oldest inhabitant of this table, let me give you the precedence, and present to you a dear friend of mine, Dr. Julius Corner, formerly house surgeon at St. Barnabas Hospital, and consulting physician of some other place, when he looked such a boy that his patients had no confidence in him.”

“They ought to have now, then,” said Felix, shaking hands with him.

“Go on with the soup, doctor, and catch us up. Waiter, another bottle of this hock, and put the sparkling in ice; bring that up with the haunch. Now,” turning to the doctor, “I will do all the talking,” continued Carew; “*je commence être un père gris*, as they said in that detestable lingo over the water—I have had my tongue oiled. Our friend Corner, not only a surgeon, but one who has

taken his degree, finding that he could not obtain sufficient credence in London, has fled to Stoney-Mudborough, in the county of Carrotshire, and there practises on the *dura corpora* of the chaw-bacons."

"Detestable Cockney," said the doctor, drinking to his friend. "The fact is, George, you don't know all. I am settled in practice, and, to give myself stability and position, I am married to——"

"The sweetest, prettiest,—we'll spare the rest; but we will drink the bride's health in moselle," cried Carew.

"At my expense," said the doctor.

"Not a bit of it," interrupted Carew; "I, sir, am the Lucullus of the day."

And so, with friendly jest and joke, the dinner passed off, and when the young fellows adjourned to a private smoking-room, and sat comfortably down to coffee and cigars, Carew found very little difficulty in persuading his guests—as he had proved by demonstration—that there is at least one eating-house in London where you can get an excellent dinner, notwithstanding that the *carte* is not so extensive as at the "Trois Frères," or even at Voisin's, in Paris, and the five hundred letters of

complaint from men who want two pounds of rump steak and potatoes for sixpence, to the contrary.

“The fact is, London, if you know it well, is the cheapest and best place for a dinner of any kind in the world. And now, doctor, as you are under a promise, tell us how it is that you have fallen into the toils of wedlock.”

As nothing in the world makes people so intimate as a good dinner, Dr. Corner, having bound Carew by a heavy promise, strengthened by a fine, not to interrupt him, commenced his story, which will be found in the following chapter.

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## CHAPTER XV.

## THE DOCTOR'S STORY.

**T**HE four friends having settled themselves very comfortably in their easy chairs, and enjoying their cigars, Dr. Corner commenced by laying down his cigar and taking a modest sip of coffee; then, looking chiefly at his old friend George Carew, thus began:—

“I had passed the College, and ‘walked,’ as we then termed it, the hospital, but was not quite old enough to practise. However, as soon as I was of the required age, up I went, with a very juvenile appearance, and, doubtless, considerably more confidence than I should now feel, for my examination. Old Cutler, senior surgeon at St. Barnabas, who principally took me in hand, gave me some stiff questions, but was now and then pleased to look over the top of his spectacles and emit a grunt of satisfaction at my answers. When everything was over, and my mouth was very dry with a

fever of anxious expectation, and my face, of an unusual pallor, expressed a clammy dew, the stern Cutler demanded how old I was.

“‘Twenty-two,’ I said, eagerly.

“‘Umph!’ said he. ‘And how long have you been twenty-two?’—this almost incredulously.

“‘Since eight o’clock yesterday evening,’ I returned, to convey conviction, as it were, by descending to particulars.

“‘That will do,’ said he, with a grim smile. ‘You ought to make a very fair practitioner, for you have been eager enough to get into practice. Go: you are licensed to slay.’

“My next object was to make a practice. I determined not to buy one, but to work myself into position and fame. I had a great idea of fame. I dreamt of all the best doctors in the county, containing the village where I shortly set up, failing to cure Lord Demilion, the great man of the neighbourhood; and of my being sent for in a hurry, seeing the case at a glance, ridiculing the diagnosis of my brethren, who stood paralysed at my boldness, resorting to something exceedingly desperate, effecting a wonderful cure, and living for ever on the reputation made by it. Of course I dreamt that I became physician ordinary and

extraordinary to the great Demilion family ; that Demilion asserted publicly that he never could have lived without me, nor would ever let me live more than a mile away from his park ; that the *Lancet* had reported the whole of the case, and that the senior surgeon at the Hôtel Dieu, in Paris, had turned yellow with envy when he heard that the gold medal, the great prize for surgery, was to be sent to me, an unknown rival, and, oh, horror ! an Englishman !

“Ah ! what wild dreams we have ! I didn't know the precise form that mine assumed, but fancy that one of these forms—the instance of my great cure—took the shape of trepanning. ‘My lord,’ I dreamt I said to Demilion, a thin, melancholy, and very rich seigneur, who had read all the encyclopædist's so assiduously that he was attacked with brain fever—he was supposed to be in a rational state between the paroxysms of madness—‘the only way effectually to cure you is to take off the top of the cranium, and remove a portion of your lordship's too exuberant and lively brain.’ My rivals turned blue with horror at such a proposal. ‘And,’ muttered his lordship, with extreme feebleness, ‘what will be the consequence if I refuse?’ ‘My lord,’ I (imagined that I)

returned boldly, 'I cannot answer for the consequences; or rather I can.' Here I took out my watch. 'In two hours, thirty-seven minutes, and twenty seconds your lordship will breathe your last.' His lordship smiled with the resignation of a philosopher. 'Send for Mr. Capias,' said he; 'he is in waiting, and has my will ready executed. I wish to attest it before I submit. Young man, Napoleon won the Bridge of Lodi when a mere lad; he was a youth, but he was bold. Into your hands, bold like him, I commit myself——'

"His lordship did not finish the sentence, because the next moment he was in a fit of raving madness. I saw there was not a moment to be lost. I turned out Mr. Capias, forced my terrified brethren to strap his lordship down, gave him a huge dose of laudanum—ether as an anæsthetic was not then known—and in ten minutes his lordship's scalp was removed, and his head relieved of the top of the cranium, and a few ounces of brain. In a fortnight afterwards his lordship was walking about in his right mind, or rather the best *part* of his mind. All the indigestible notions of D'Alembert and Diderot seemed happily to have been removed with the portion of brain I took away. Lord Demilion led a reformed life, and busied

himself, not in sneering at other people's religion, but in exhibiting his own. He built a church, schools, cottages for the poor, and——

“ I had got just so far in my dream. I need not say that it was a dream, and that I never gained the Demilion connection at all, or, in fact, a single patient worth five pounds a-year in that pretty, lonely, and exceedingly healthy village I set up in, when an old woman, half-drudge and wholly the post-woman of the village, brought me word that I was wanted.

“ ‘ Not at Demilion Park,’ said I, with a bitter smile, for, awaking from my day-dream, I had felt disappointed at the blank reality.

“ ‘ Noa,’ returned the withered, brown, healthy, absurdly healthy old creature, who had probably never taken a pill or had the headache in her life — ‘ Noa, Dr. Corner, na such luck for a young ’un. It be a Parson Williams as wants you ; he’s very bad, poor man.’ Thus saying, the post-woman vanished.

“ ‘ Parson Williams !’ said I. ‘ These people call every local preacher a parson, and, egad, every quack a doctor ! There’s no luck for me ; it is not even the clergyman who is ill.’ I put on my hat in a huff, and went on to Mr. Williams’s house.

“It was at the end of the village—uptown, as the inhabitants called it—and a quaint, pretty, but bare enough little residence it was. The road, branching off into two divisions, had left a triangular bit of common, a sort of no-man’s-land, which some bold adventurer, with not the slightest right on his side, had seized, and stuck thereon a pedlar’s shop. That speedily changed into a butcher’s, then became deserted and a nuisance to the village; then the Wesleyans opened the shop to preach in it, and at last railed in the space and erected a plain, barn-like chapel, at the back of which was a structure, rather like a large washhouse than a small residence, but which contained four rooms, and was the local preacher’s habitation.

“To the door of this little house I, Julius Corner, Doctor of Medicine and Licentiate of the Apothecaries’ Hall, at school known as J. Corner, and more frequently as Jack Horner, did apply the handle of my worn gingham umbrella rather forcibly, as is the manner of us doctors—a manner assumed probably with a view of making our patients satisfied with our presence and of re-adjusting their nerves.

“‘Is Mr. Williams to be seen?’ I asked. ‘I am——’

“ ‘Dr. Corner,’ said a sweet voice, as the sweetest of visions seemed to stand before me, ‘my father will be glad to see you.’

“ ‘Her father ! goodness gracious !’ thought I to myself ; ‘fancy an old local preacher having such a daughter !’ She stood there, just aside to permit me to enter the narrow and small hall, with her pretty eyes turned towards mine, a look of anxious hope on her face, her white throat poised upon her beautiful shoulders, and surrounded with a frill of blue silk ribbon, the trimming of her dress, which was worn close and high. The deep blue of her eyes matched the ribbon very nicely, and set off by contrast the rose colour of her cheeks, and the warm, red brown of her hair. She seemed to be an artist in colour, for everything she wore always fell into its due contrast or harmony. So, too, she seemed always to be graceful in her movements ; and, had it not been for her extreme unaffectedness and simplicity, she would have appeared to have studied all her attitudes, they were so graceful. Her chin was round, and just sufficiently prominent, her upper lip of the true shape, and beautifully and palely red, while the lower was fuller and redder. When she smiled, which she did readily at my awkward and

intense gaze, she gave a peculiar sweetness to her whole face, which smiled all over, dimpled cheeks, blue eyes, mouth and all. The sight of her was to me something so pleasant that when she spoke again I fancied a long interval of time must have elapsed since I first saw her.

“ ‘He is in the parlour,’ she said, leading the way.

“ Well, the illness of Mr. Williams was not much, but it was obstinate ; it arose, I fancy, from the depressed views he took of religion and life, and from a great deal of pride, long suppressed, and most conscientiously kept down, and wounded, perhaps, by his position or his poverty. He was a good man, and had manfully struggled with his faults, trying to carry out the true view of religion, with regard to his failing, in the right way. Happily, when I saw my patient, I took a more practical and scientific diagnosis of his case than I did of that of my Lord Demilion in my waking dream ; I talked cheerfully to him, told him that I would get him well enough for prayer-meeting on Sunday, and, writing out a prescription, called in Miss Williams to give her my directions.

“ ‘ You will send your servant to N——,’ said I, ‘ for this prescription, for the village apothecary



will not be good enough;’ I mentioned a town some six miles off—‘and tell the servant——’

“‘I am the servant,’ she said simply, and with a smile; ‘I can get some of our neighbours to stay in the house, and will walk over.’

“‘Nay, if that is all,’ said I, feigning occupation—for it is incumbent on all doctors to seem busy—‘I have to go to N—— myself; I will see it made up and send it to you. That disposes of that.’

“‘You will mind the written directions,’ I continued; ‘and when Mr. Williams awakes in the night, it is incumbent that he should take his medicine; but tell the nurse not to wake him.’

“‘I am the nurse,’ she added, with equal sweetness and simplicity; ‘local preachers in our community are not very rich, and my father can hardly maintain me, much less a servant.’

“‘And a very good thing too,’ said I, with surprise, speaking cheerfully, though in answer to a look of pain from the sick man; ‘when you want a thing done, do it yourself; I am sure my boy breaks as many bottles as he delivers; I hope he won’t break the one which I send you.’

“‘What a wonderful creature this is!’ said I, inwardly; ‘how beautifully clean all things look!

how bright is that old desk, and there is not a spot of dust on the preacher's books ;' I glanced at a huge ' Matthew Henry,' which, side by side with a folio ' Baxter,' a ' Toplady,' and the ' Ductor Dubitantium ' of Jeremy Taylor, encumbered the table and desk of the Reverend Mr. Williams.

" ' I wonder what her name is?' thought I to myself, after I had bidden her good-bye. ' Here, what a pretty fellow am I, dreaming of becoming head-physician to the court, and in half an hour afterwards falling in love with the daughter of a dissenting minister, who is at the same time servant-of-all-work and head-nurse to her father. But then, what a pretty creature she is!'

" Suffice it to say that my selfish considerations about the lowliness of Miss Prudentia Williams—her father called her ' Prue '—did not last long. I called next day, having manfully walked to N——, and got my own prescription made up, and then went to my patient's house to see how far he had amended. I found him rather worse ; but I put a bold face on the matter, and told him that we doctors always thought that a little relapse after the first visit was a good sign. Miss Prue opened her pretty round eyes upon me with implicit belief—a simple credence on her part

which made me very much ashamed of myself. I entered into conversation with the young lady, and found her excellently well read in English literature, preferring Shakespeare's 'Tempest,' Goldsmith's 'Vicar,' and Dr. Johnson's 'Rasselas,' to all other books. I heard incidentally that at music she was a proficient; but there was no sign of a piano in the enlarged laundry in which she and her father were living. When I purposely made a small excursion into French literature, Miss Prue was equally at home there, and capped a quotation of mine from the 'Malade Imaginaire;' nay, I found that she understood the simple Latin, or Anglicised Latin, of my prescriptions well enough, by reading that barbarous jargon which we leeches are not ashamed to put as directions after our prescriptions.

"'Where can she have got all this?' thought I. 'Ah! I see: the father is a learned man—a man much beyond his sphere, poor fellow!'

"I was not very wrong there. Mr. Williams had, many years ago, with a favourite sister, taken to the Wesleyan Connexion from earnest religious conviction, and separated himself from his family and from brilliant prospects. It was, however, not to him that pretty little Prue owed her accom-

plishments. While the brother, earnest in the ministry, and careless of worldly advancement, was moving about from station to station, and mission to mission, Miss Williams, his sister, herself very highly educated, had opened a school for the daughters of Nonconformists, in which, after due time, she had educated her niece, the only child of her brother, who, after a short marriage, had been left a widower. Good as the preacher was, earnest, noble, and thoroughly imbued with a Christian spirit, the rough, rude, and often selfish manners of his flock hurt him exceedingly. Poor people! although they knew it not, he had given up all for them; and the narrowness and meanness with which they—or, say, only some of them—treated their local preachers affected more than one of them—nay, wounded them to the death. ‘It was just the same with Father Wesley,’ he once said to me, with a faint smile; ‘that saint, who rode, perhaps, fifty miles to preach to the poor people in Cornwall, had often to lie on his saddle-bags in a loft, and had hard matter to get corn for his horse.’

“‘Too true, poor papa!’ said Prue, sadly; ‘but we are better off, are we not? Here, Mrs. Boughton has sent you three pots of black-currant jam!’

“‘And,’ said I, ‘your house is small, but very neat and elegant.’ I glanced round at the furniture and at some good china vases and well-bound books that decorated the parlour, which was dining-room, study, drawing-room, boudoir, and breakfast-room to their little house.

“‘Ah!’ said the local preacher, turning his white head towards the vases on the mantel-shelf, and looking at them fondly, ‘I did not think that I should have ever loved the perishing things of this world so much as I do those bits of china. They belonged to my dear sister, who is now in heaven.’

“‘That I am sure she is,’ said Prue, blithely, with a kind, beaming smile on her face. ‘Dear aunt! she was all in the world to me; but I would not call her back from that blessed home for worlds. Yes, Doctor, you are quite right; it is a pretty little house. Papa used to quote Herrick’s verses about it—written, too, on his own parsonage:—

“‘Lord, thou hast given me to dwell,  
A little cell!  
A little cell whose humble roof  
Is water proof!’

And so ours is. It is very compact, is it not, Dr. Corner? so compact that dear papa dares

not to smoke his pipe when he composes his sermons, because he is afraid of perfuming the chapel. He is like Dr. Parr, you know, and many other sound divines, and loves his pipe of tobacco.'

"'Dear me!' said I to myself, rubbing my eyes, 'here is a minister's daughter quoting Herrick, citing Dr. Parr, and calling tobacco a perfume. What comes next?' I had fixed my eyes so fondly and admiringly on those of Miss Prue—and I am afraid that my eyes held a language of their own that I could not prevent their using—that the young lady slowly let hers fall, and, with a little sigh, said, 'And what are you thinking of, Doctor?' We had become quite intimate, I and this family; and I spent more time with my first and principal patient than I should have done elsewhere, had I been in better practice. Miss Prue's question puzzled me.

"'I was thinking,' said I, with a smile and a blush, 'that you are quite a character, Miss Prue. I wonder what a phrenologist would say of you?' I blundered this out more as an apology than anything else.

"'Oh, I can tell you,' she said, with a lively little curtsy. 'To amuse papa once, and, indeed, to carry out his wishes——'

“ ‘You see, Doctor,’ said Mr. Williams, ‘phrenology is an interesting study, though medical men give it little credit; and, wishing to know in what direction Prue’s education should be forwarded, I consulted a very clever manipulator, but rather an illiterate fellow, poor man! as you will see, about Prue’s bumps. I dare say she has got the paper; we seldom forget anything which relates to ourselves, especially if we be women.’

“ ‘Thank you, papa dear,’ said Prue; ‘you are getting better, I see. Now, after that, dare I show Dr. Corner my character?’

“ ‘Oh, pray do,’ said I, getting interested; ‘papa only means a bit of fun. I am a believer in phrenology myself, and am a devoted student of it. I should like to see whether the gentleman and I agree in our estimate.’

“ ‘Oh!’ said Prue, ‘you have estimated me, have you? Well, you shall see, Doctor; only, remember, this gentleman, whom everybody said was really clever at his practice, could not spell very well. He travelled about from place to place with a hideous collection of plaster casts of heads, of which no one ever could tell the philosopher from the murderer. I remember papa thought there was a startling likeness between

Demosthenes, the orator, and Courvoisier, who murdered Lord William Russell. Perhaps he had labelled them wrongly, papa dear; but no, that could not be, because the names were cut deeply in the plaster. However, here is my character.' Prue had been turning over a few papers in her desk, and brought out a piece of coarse paper, neatly folded and very badly written upon, as follows; the spelling and the numbers, which refer to some chart of the operator, I imagine, are, as they say in the newspapers, 'his own.'

"'22. Why does he begin at 22, Miss Prue?' said I; 'that surely could not have been your age.'

"'Well,' she answered, 'that is a leading question, Doctor. It was not my age. That was written just two years ago, when I was exactly eighteen years of age. Go on reading.'

"I obeyed with a pleased smile. 'Only twenty!' I thought; 'just the age for my wife.'

"'The character of Miss Prudentea Williams examined by me, Francis Blank, Finoligest.' (He certainly has an original way of spelling.)

"'22. You are very affectshunate.

"'24. Very attashed to childrin.

"'18. (He is going backward.) Full of controll of youreselfe.



“ ‘26. (Forward again.) Devoted to friends.

“ ‘14. Not fond of eating and drinking.’

“ ‘That is a consideration, Miss Prue,’ said I, ‘for your future husband, in these dear times. I think the Finoligest an honest fellow.’

“ ‘Go on, sir,’ returned Prue, archly, ‘and leave your remarks till the paper is concluded.’

“ ‘15. Not too much enigy.

“ ‘10. But not destructive.

“ ‘You are fond of keeping secrets.

“ ‘18. (Why, that’s the second 18!) Rather fond of money, for money’s worth.

“ ‘18. Considerably fond of making things.

“ ‘4. You think next to nothing of yourself.’

“ ‘Then that’s very bad taste on your part,’ I interpolated, *sotto voce*. Prue said nothing, but gave me a gracious smile, with just the slightest tinge of deprecation in it.

“ ‘23. Like people for to prayse you.

“ ‘10. Not generally benev’lent.

“ ‘22. Because you are so carefull.

“ ‘9. Fond of musick.

“ ‘8. A great deal of language.

“ ‘18. You like to go to church sometimes. Your ven’ration is about fayre.

“ ‘18. Your firmness is also fayre.

“ ‘22. You are uncommon conscientious.

“ ‘20. You are also soon supprized.

“ ‘24. Also you are rather wittey.’

“ ‘Really,’ said I, laughing heartily at the queer document, ‘the man, I suppose, was an enthusiast in the science; for, in spite of his defective education, he could not have given you a character more close to the truth. There are higher qualities, Miss Williams,’ I said, gravely, as I rose, ‘which quite escape the phrenologist. These arise from duties well performed, and from the characteristics of our mental organisation being well seconded by principle——’

“ ‘Or by the grace of God,’ said the preacher, solemnly. ‘We map our heads, and offer to lay down our little laws for the conduct of life, and we forget the great Director, who can give firmness to a broken reed and holy strength to those who are weak of purpose.’

“ ‘Amen,’ said Prue, solemnly. She had a natural love and veneration for her father, although the ‘Finoligest’ had given her but a moderate inclination to ‘go to church,’ and she was of a prayerful, religious nature, as I well knew. The fact was, I was in love with this girl. Never had I seen so simple, so dear, so generous a character

united to so much modesty, capacity, and beauty. As for Mr. Francis Blank, 'Finoligest,' I became at once a convert both to the science and to the extraordinary insight of the practitioner.

"My own practice did not, however, prosper. My patient was getting rapidly well—an effect due, as I humbly conceive, not to my physic so much as to the love and interest which his rough flock exhibited towards their pastor, and to a visit which I persuaded the rector—a man of high family, and a ripe and good scholar—to pay him as we walked home together from the sick-bed of my second patient, a villager.

"'A very good man, that Mr. Williams,' said the parson, who, far above the little jealousies which might exist in the village, always followed out his own good impulses. 'I will go and see him at once. The Wesleyans are our brothers. John Wesley always believed himself in our community, and urged his flock to go to their parish church two or three times a year.'

"'Mr. Williams is a scholar and a gentleman,' said I, 'and you will be gratified with his conversation.'

"'Very good, Doctor,' returned the parson—a stalwart, jolly, squire-like, looking man, who did

an immense deal of good in his own manly, brusque way—'I'll come.'

"And come he did, greatly to Prue's delight, and to the comfort of her father, who put on his courtliest manners, and delighted the rector.

"As Mr. Williams was fast passing out of my governance, and I should shortly be obliged to discontinue my visits, I determined, after a sleepless night, to say what I might in my own favour to Miss Williams. Little Prue, as her father fondly called her, had become all the world to me. Her words, her smiles, her patronage, were of more importance than that of my Lord Demilion, or the whole houseful of hereditary legislators. I found out that single doctors were not so successful as married ones, and that, in fact, I wanted a wife most desperately. So it was that I managed to get Miss Prue—as the enlarged wash-house was by far too small to be the scene of such an offer as that of my heart—to call for some soothing medicine for her father at my house, a very humble, but, in comparison with her house, a perfectly palatial, residence. When there, with many struggles to keep my courage to the sticking-place I determined to ask her to be my wife.

"After receiving the medicine, my dear little

sweetheart wished to hurry away, although I pressed her to stay one minute, and even offered to walk home with her to her father's. But little Prue's delicacy became alarmed: she could not stay, she said; and as for walking down the village with me, that she could not think of doing. She was hurrying to the door, when my changed and earnest voice arrested her, and I begged her to come for one moment to the parlour. I offered her a chair, and stood up before her, looking at her changing colour and her pretty, wondering eyes.

“‘My dear Miss Williams,’ said I, gravely, ‘I believe that I love you as no man ever before loved you. I tell you this plainly, because I am sure that it would be useless for me to try to conceal it. I have seen your goodness to your father, your sweet temper under trial, your watchfulness, your calmness, and patience——’

“Prue had covered her eyes with her hands, and, greatly to my surprise, I saw, by the tears which came slowly through her fingers, was crying. I continued: ‘I am but a poor fellow myself, Miss Williams, and am half-ashamed to offer myself to you. I am no fit mate for one so beautiful; but if the devotion of a life can repay

you, I can promise you that from my soul.' I had fallen on one knee before the creature I loved so much, and tried to take one of her hands. She gave me both, and looked at me with such sad eyes, so bright and lustrous with recent weeping, that I feared greatly, and turned pale with anxiety. 'What,' thought I, 'was the stiffest examination conducted by the grim old Senior Surgeon Cutler to this?'

"The thin, transparent eyelids shut themselves tightly down over the pretty eyes, and then, with an evident effort, Miss Prue spoke. Her words fell as softly, as coldly, and as distinctly as snow-flakes at the slow commencement of a heavy fall.

"'My dear Doctor—I will say, my dear friend—I am so much obliged to you for your love, your devotion—I return your love; I do, indeed, but as a sister.' I had put up my hand to take hers at the beginning of the slow, sad speech, but she prevented me with a gesture. 'As a sister, Dr. Corner; it can be nothing more—for——' Here she paused, and then said, firmly, 'for ever. You must not ask me any reasons; you must not press me any further; as a man of honour, which I know you are, you must give up all pursuit of me. I feel you have done me a great honour, which,

indeed, I hardly deserve; but it is best, it is bravest, to tell you at once that what you wish can never be.'

"My head was bent down as she said these cold words. A white hand was put before my lips to kiss, and in a moment, as I remained there stupefied and frozen into dumbness, little Prue—I beg her pardon, Miss Prudentia Williams—had passed from the room.

"How long I so remained I can hardly say. When I sprang up I was full of an intense shame and rage—shame felt for myself and rage for her. 'Oh!' said I, bitterly, 'I am not good enough for her! She wants some one more rich and accomplished than a village doctor. She has tastes beyond her sphere; and, as lowliness is young ambition's ladder, may dream of his lordship in the big park just by. King Corphetua wooed a beggar-maid. Why should not Lord Demilion—he is a learned, well-read man—marry this pearl of daughters of a local preacher? Why not, indeed! What a fool was I to be led away with her innocence and beauty! *She* love! *She* can never love! She has got no soul in that beautiful body.'

"Thus I troubled and fretted myself. It is not

a pleasant thing to be rejected; it finds out the weakest part of one's pride; for, however good we are, we men think that we offer a great prize to a woman when we offer her ourselves. However it was, I was so tormented with my love and with Miss Prue's refusal, that I could not rest. I wandered about my small room like an animal in a cage. I felt wounded, humiliated at first, and then a gleam of hope sprang up in my bosom. After all, did this woman reject me because she could not love me? or was there some mysterious barrier between us? She had spoken so solemnly, 'It can never be.' What was it? She should at least tell me that. Then a sudden impulse came upon me, and I determined to seek an interview with her father, whom, by the way, I thought I might have spoken to at first. He at least should explain the mystery to me.

"Fired by this new resolution, I put my hat on and sought the village. I could not rest under my rejection. I determined to know all, and if the barriers were, as I had been told, impassable; if she loved another—here a sickly, cold tremor passed over me—I would strike my little camp, and seek refuge in London, and there devote my life to my profession.



“ So I strode on. Recent rain had softened the earth, and the air smelt fresh and balmy ; but the wind had risen, and was noisily careering over the hedges and through the trees. The weather suited my frame of mind ; and, closely buttoned-up, and eager and resolute, I soon reached the cottage. Sheltered by some large trees, the few shrubs round the chapel were still enough, and I unlatched the gate wherein the small congregation were wont to enter, and came to the side of the chapel, thus entering the cottage from some secret impulse, some sense of repulse and degradation, unseen.

“ It was well that I did so.

“ The door was open, and, standing in the little hall, pausing ere I knocked at the half-opened door, I heard sounds of weeping. Little Prue appeared to be kneeling before her father, who was sitting in his easy chair, and apparently comforting her. ‘ You have done well, my child,’ he said ; ‘ I can trust the impulses of your heart, so tender and so true——’

“ ‘ Tender and true !’ I muttered, grinding my teeth in sarcastic agony.

“ ‘ And yet so wise for its age, poor little heart ! poor heart !’

“‘And yet he loves me, father; he spoke so earnestly, so fondly. We know how good, how simple he is. It is better thus for him to bear the first shock; he will soon get over it, and will win some happier heart, some one better than I am——’ Here was a fresh flood of tears, and the father again spoke to comfort her: ‘No, no one better, Prue, I am sure; you are the best judge of your way in life, my child, though I could have well liked this amiable young man, who is clever, too, and may rise——’

“‘Ah! but father, father,’ said Prue, ‘think of yourself, growing old and lonely in your poverty, worn-out with fatigue and work, and none to help you.’

“‘None, save the Lord, my child,’ returned the old preacher, reverently.

“‘Think,’ she said, rapidly giving utterance to her full heart, ‘of the poverty we have had to endure, think of the trials and the want, since aunt died; could you endure this again, alone? would you have this heightened by me away from you, and having, perhaps, the same struggle to go through with a husband, and, it may be, little ones? a husband upon whose advancement I should be a burden and a heavy drag, upon whose

bright career I should be a blot. I could not bear it, father, indeed I could not. I have seen too much trial with you to endure it with *him*, or to drag him into it; for I love him, father, indeed I do; I love him in his goodness, his nobleness, in his loneliness, and in this bitter trial I love him with all my heart.'

"The tears—tears of joy—which had been running very quickly and silently down my face, gave a sudden gush, when Miss Prue, having finished her confession, laid her head upon her father's knee, and burst out into a good cry. I don't think, as a rule, that crying is a pretty noise; but I was never so much delighted with any prima donna, warbling the divinest *aria* in the world, as I was with that burst of sobbing, '*con spirito*,' as they write on the music, of dear little Prue's. In a moment I was in the parlour, and, hugely to the surprise of old Mr. Williams, I was down on my knees, before him, with my arm round his daughter's neck. She didn't seem so much astonished as he was, but suffered it to lie there while I said—

"My dear, dear, dearest Prue, that is all a mistake of yours which you just now told me up at the surgery. Your father knows all about it, so I need not tell him. But when you rejected

me, simply because you would have spared me because of my poverty, you jumped to a conclusion not warranted by facts.'

"Here little Prue dried her eyes, and looked up into my face with a puzzled, pleased smile.

" 'Not warranted by facts,' I repeated. 'I am not a poor man; I am rather a rich one. I had romantic notions of making a business, and depending upon my own exertions; I detested the trick some doctors have of making a show, and I made none, not even a red lamp. I made a vile choice in coming to a village where all the inhabitants are impertinently healthy. But I made a good choice in coming to find you, my darling. I have just five thousand pounds in the funds; 'tis not much, but a fifth of that will buy a good connection in London, or where you will, and the rest can remain where it is. And now I am not going to give you a chance to refuse me again; not a bit of it.' (Prue put up one little white, hand deprecatingly.) 'I will ask your father, as I should have done at first. Will you, dear sir, knowing all that has passed between us, give me your daughter?'


" 'My children,' said the old preacher, with a smile of happiness—and in a moment Prue

was in my arms, and with her own around my neck.

“In the course of that evening I had recourse to Prue’s desk: it was one of the worldly goods that I claimed of her for a certain purpose; I tyrannically claimed it, and she yielded submissively. ‘Here it is,’ said I, reverently, putting aside her letters, and taking the coarsely-written paper, ‘here is all I want, madam; you may keep the rest. Mr. Francis Blank is the finest Fenologist in the world; for, if it had not been for that quality he so well delineates, I should not have been one quarter so happy as I am now; indeed I could not be happier, and I owe it all, dear Prue, to that one fine and rare quality. Here it is, marked No. 4 on the chart: ‘You think next to nothing of YOURSELF,’ and therefore WE—I took her father’s hand as I spoke, and, placing my arm round her waist, drew her towards us—therefore we, my darling wife, think everything of you.”

## CHAPTER XVI.

## CRITICAL OPINIONS.

HEN the story was concluded, Dr. Julius Corner, the narrator, who looked rather red, and was otherwise not unmoved, lighted another cigar, and cleared his throat, hoarse with emotion as well as talking, with a deep and long application to a glass of cold spring water. "There is nothing like it after all, George," he said; "I am gradually approaching teetotalism myself."

"We usually do after a good dinner and some choice wines. I don't know anything which heightens beauty so much as contrast," said Cimabue, with a whiff. By St. Vincent de Paul, that's a pretty story of yours, though. How much reality exceeds fiction! does it not, George?"

"Say nothing about it, sir," said Carew; "I am laying by all those little incidents for a work of fiction upon which I am engaged, and to-morrow,

if you like, I will with pleasure tell you one story, or rather read it to you, and then you can measure fiction and reality if you like."

This he said with a smile, and a burlesque daring quite unnatural to him; for George was one of the most modest of authors—a modest enough race, too, when of any worth. Then, striking a bell, he summoned the waiter and paid the bill, and as he linked his arm with the Doctor's, as the whole party walked with him towards a newspaper office, he poured forth such a eulogium on the Doctor's story as made the modest narrator blush again and again.

"Little Prue," said George, "is a charming character. A staunch old widower like myself, mourning for my lost love, and comparing women one with another, may be allowed to be a judge; and from what you have said of her, there is no lady in the land whom I should be more proud to meet than Mrs. Julius Corner."

"I hope that meeting will not be far distant," said the happy possessor of that lady; "and I would advise you all to get married as quickly as you can."

"A case of the fox, again," said Cimabue; "why, we are all married men; here is Felix, little

more than twenty-two, and a father, and I can show you a procession of young painters, and such a wife, sir, that no man in London, in all London can equal."

"Bravo, Scumble!" ejaculated Carew; "I'll back you up—lay any money on what he says; never saw a better woman than Mrs. Scumble. The truth is, that when a woman is married to the man she loves, she grows better and better every year of her life; that is, supposing the man is true and generous and knows how to treat her."

"There are some men," said Dr. Corner, "who never make good surgeons, who always bungle with an operation, who kill their patients with a surprising facility, and are no more to be thought of as belonging to the faculty, of ornamenting the noble art of healing, than butchers are. So there are some men who never should be trusted with a woman's heart, and who make as great a mull of that as a sailor would of a fine-mouthed horse if he were driving, or a groom in steering a thirty-ton yacht with all the canvas set and the wind blowing on to a lee shore."

"Or a painter and glazier—a good grainer, let us say—would in copying a fine Titian or a Van Huysum," added Cimabue.



“Or, let us add, a coal-whipper would in handling a delicate Dresden vase, all eggshell flowers and gilded scrolls,” suggested Felix.

The little party having now arrived in Fleet Street, and Carew being pressed with a mighty desire to see his proof, the party separated, Mr. Scumble and Corner going towards Covent Garden, there to listen to certain glees and smoke a quiet cigar, and Felix returning home to relate to his wife some sketch of the pleasant evening he had enjoyed. The friends did not, however, separate until George Carew had invited them to meet one or two others at his rooms the next evening, when he promised to read them a story he had just finished. “Not that I’m given to reading stories,” he said; “and indeed I think that to all authors, except some happy individuals, the contemplation of their own works must be rather a trouble than otherwise. But I’ve promised, you know, and that promise I must keep.”

It was in compliance with this, on the next evening, the company being duly assembled, that George Carew read out the following story, calling it “At Last; or, the Window of a Woman’s Heart.”

“’Tis a window,” said Dr. Corner, rudely

interrupting the reader, as he nervously shuffled with his papers, "that we should all like to look into."

"Some of us do; and, if we believe modern journals and modern authors, see nothing so very pleasant there," said the barrister, who was a guest.

"Hold your tongue, and let us peep into this casement which Carew is about to hold open to us," returned Cimabue, settling himself comfortably in one of the many chairs with which Carew's study was furnished. Silence then being obtained, the author began his reading.

## CHAPTER XVII.

"AT LAST; OR, THE WINDOW OF A WOMAN'S  
HEART."

**T**HERE are philosophers, of whom I am one,' said the sick man, with a smile, 'who do not credit woman's friendship. I don't mean towards man—that's certain enough; but towards one another. If they are friends while they are girls, the friendship soon disappears when they grow into women; nay, the apparition of a lover will make friendship fly away as quickly as possible.'

"This was by far too long a sentence for one so very ill, although produced by fits and gasps.

" 'Perhaps you are right, my dear boy,' said a gentleman by the bedside, holding the dying man's hand in his. The two men were old school-fellows, and at this time of trial the old boy's feelings came back. It was again Harry and Willy with them, and Harry lay in the darkened

room—a strong, powerful man suddenly stricken down in the midst of his life and strength. He had been forbidden to speak, but speak he would ; he had so much to say, and he endeavoured to say it, although his life-blood welled up to his lips every time he spoke.

“Willy Frazer, who sat clasping his hand, spoke in a very low tone, as if to hush his friend, and continued holding up his finger as he spoke. ‘Perhaps so ; but what do we want with a philosophical disquisition now?—all you have to do is to get well.’ The patient shook his head. ‘At any rate,’ said Frazer, ‘oh, hang it, Harry, don’t die—don’t think of dying yet!’

“There was so much feeling in these broken words that the dying man turned towards him with a sad smile and marked the tears in his eyes. He would have spoken, but his friend put his hand over his mouth. He saw at a glance that William Frazer believed in him as he had always done—believed that by an act of will he could do more than any doctor in the land, or in the world. The reason of this faith was that Harry and Willy, at school and through life, were two different beings. Harry Armstrong was a dark, strong felloow, with a chest big enough for two ; an arm

which served him well, a ready bold wit ; and, in fact, power in him, and plenty of it too. He had protected Frazer, who was but a weak little fellow, soft and docile, but very clever, and who of course, as we all of us like those whom we protect, began to like him. The mutual respect and liking continued through life, and the mutual difference too. Frazer was poor, and not very well able to help himself ; Armstrong rich, and able to help others. He helped his friend to a very decent match and to a cosy place ; and he helped himself to one of the handsomest wives in the kingdom, who brought him a daughter, and then shortly died. Then suddenly, too, he began to lose his heartiness ; and although for twelve long years he was always a foremost man, he was never the man he used to be. That great chest of his, which ought, as the doctors said, to have been sound enough for anything, grew very troublesome ; he caught cold upon cold, neglected himself, and was at last brought down to where we found him, with no hopes of life ; his will made, his fortune left to his daughter, and his daughter and all her future to one whom he could trust—his soft, tender old schoolfellow, who was never half the man he was, but was now, in life at least,

worth twenty thousand times more. Armstrong knew and felt all this, and yet could not, dared not, say what was nearest to him; and Frazer looked at him to explain the asking eye, very earnestly and very fondly. Suddenly that eye grew very bright indeed, and Frazer in alarm rang a little bell. The physician came in, the patient rose suddenly from the high pillows that propped him up, put his white handkerchief to his mouth and covered it with crimson blood—and then lay back never to speak more.

“Some months after this Mr. William Frazer, in his comfortable house in the New-road—which then was in the country, as the open fields stretched up to Hampstead and Highgate—sat quietly tasting a glass of old port—and wine of 1820 was then of the future—and looking out upon his half-moon lawn and the circular sweep of gravel-ride, up which two girls of about sixteen were slowly riding. They contrasted as much as the two schoolfellows could have done. One was dark, somewhat tall, and very beautiful; the other fair, *petite*, graceful, and only pretty. One was clothed wholly in mourning, almost without a bow or ribbon; the other was dressed in white, with lilac ribbons and bows, and with a huge

straw hat with lilac streamers to it. The difference extended even to the ponies; one was finely bred, strong, and black; the other a cream-coloured pet pony, that took liberties, and was obstinate and fond, would only go by fits and starts, and was altogether an irregular pony, decently quiet to ride and drive, but of no character at all.

“These young ladies, whom Mr. Frazer was gazing on with quiet melancholy, were both dear to him; one, as being his own daughter, the other as the daughter of his dear and dead friend. The meditative gentleman quietly took another glass of wine—he was soft, pensive, and fond of good living—and as he swallowed it, cracked a walnut, and said, as he peeled it, ‘Poor Harry! he died with a philosophical sentence on his lips about the friendship of woman. Now, really, if he could only see these two girls, and know their deep affection for each other, I believe he would be convinced; I really do think he would indeed, poor fellow!’

“Mr. Frazer was very easily convinced himself; and his conviction of the purity and depth of the affection of the two young ladies was well founded. They did love each other deeply, and called each other Amy and Hetty, as girls will, with a dozen

sweet adjectives by turns tacked to the names. Amy was Miss Frazer, and Hetty—the short, or, at least, Amy’s diminutive for Henrietta—was Miss Armstrong.

“ The difference, so marked externally, extended to the minds of the girls; and hence, probably, their friendship. Amy wanted guidance, Hetty could give it, and did not at all object to do so. Amy was as soft and yielding as her father; Henrietta, strong, commanding, very wise, and very pure—full of what Mr. Frazer called ‘the very best common-sense, A 1,’ which he, poor fellow, acquired with great difficulty, principally by experience, which, in his case, was indeed like the stern-lights of a ship, and only lighted the track over which he had passed.

“ ‘ Well, girls,’ said he, with a welcome equally tender to each, ‘ and what have you been talking about ?’

“ ‘ Fortune,’ said Amy; ‘ fortune, papa. And what a wonderful thing it is, isn’t it ?’

“ ‘ ’Tis, indeed,’ said Mr. Frazer, looking at his glass of port with one eye shut, as if he were reading a sentence. ‘ I never could quite understand it. Armstrong didn’t believe in it, poor fellow ! I did.’



“‘Just like Hetty,’ said Amy; ‘but what I say is—just look here. Here we stand—we are about as old as each other; but look at the difference—she has all the beauty.’ Hetty smiled and shook her head. ‘All the cleverness.’

“‘All the good sense, certainly,’ said Mr. Frazer; at which Hetty blushed.

“‘And, to crown all, the biggest fortune. Indeed, she is an heiress; and this poor dear, dear papa, is not worth half as much. I have heard him say so.’

“‘But I’d give all,’ said Hetty, earnestly, ‘to have what you have—a father.’ There were no tears in her eyes. Hetty was not given to crying; but the tone of voice touched Amy so much that she put her arms round her friend’s neck and said that she had been ‘a little fool,’ and a cruel one too, to remind Hetty of her loss; and Mr. Frazer cordially assenting in the self-imposed verdict, the conversation was changed.

“For four or five years dark and fair lived on, growing, if possible, fonder and fonder of each other. Mr. Frazer every day found that his verdict was right, and that the two young women were fast friends. Still, Amy’s character had remained the same—do we, indeed, ever change

from our originals?—and Hetty, who had improved her externally, had not altered the soft, fond heart, and the quiet, trusting mind which so much wanted some one to cling to and protect it. Mr. Frazer had long been a widower, and Amy wanted a mother—a character which Henrietta very quietly and wisely filled. She even took poor Willy Frazer in hand—he was still Willy with his friends, though verging on forty-seven—and if she did not make him lay by money, she prevented him from spending a great deal. In fact, Hetty was the acknowledged head of the establishment.

“She was busied in some household work, some tradesmen’s accounts, which ‘always made Amy’s head ache,’ and would, if Hetty had not been there, have made Frazer’s pocket ache. While the father and daughter were together, it was very seldom that they talked of her in her absence. They both loved her too much to hide anything from her; but at present they did so.

“‘I suppose, Amy,’ said Frazer, who prided himself on his knowledge of the world, as most soft easy men do, ‘I suppose we owe that invitation to Lady Trefoil’s to dear Hetty. What a treasure she is!’

“‘La! papa!’ said Amy, with slight indignation, ‘what! to get you an invitation to that stupid old dowager’s, where you said the wine was bad?’

“‘Execrable!’ said Frazer.

“‘Well, execrable; and there was no one worth speaking to except Godfrey Fielding. The young men all took notice of Hetty, and left me to myself.’

“‘Money,’ said Mr. Frazer, oracularly, ‘money is not only the root of all evil, but also the general attraction of mankind. At one time a young lady has two chances in life—that is, before she is born——’

“‘Before she is born, papa!’ interrupted Amy, in some surprise.

“‘Yes,’ continued her father; ‘the young being who is about to be born has two chances if a girl, and only one if a boy. If a girl it might be born poor—well and good; but then, if beautiful, its next chance comes. Men marry for beauty; and the daughter of a beggar might, from her beauty, be chosen to fill a throne.’ Having wound up his sentence thus prettily, Mr. Frazer rubbed his hands and apologised to his daughter—soft, good man as he was—for talking metaphysics.

“‘Chosen to fill a throne!’ said Amy, with disdain. ‘All those chances took place in the old ballad days, when the beggar lived at Bednal Green.’

“‘There are a good many beggars there now,’ said Mr. Frazer; ‘but no such chances. Yes; Godfrey Fielding was a nice young fellow.’

“‘The only one in the company that *I* cared about,’ said Amy, with decision—an unwonted decision, too—‘what say you, Hetty?’

“Miss Amy thought that Henrietta had heard the name as she entered, or she would not have asked the question. Hetty had to have it put fully to her, and then, with a very slight blush, answered ‘that she liked Mr. Fielding’s manner very much.’

“‘A man of a good family,’ said Mr. Frazer, who, in the absence of a bluebook, knew everybody; ‘good family, but poor; poor as a church mouse; indeed, he will be a church mouse, for he is just taking orders.’

“‘Ah! I supposed something of the sort, for he paid Hetty and me equal attention; and yet I would rather marry him with three hundred a year than any one else with six.’

“‘Amy, Amy,’ said Miss Armstrong, with a slight shudder, ‘how you do run on!’

“‘Greatly,’ said Frazer, tapping his half closed hands together and making his finger-nails clatter with a little clash. ‘Mr. Godfrey Fielding is what Lady Trefoil calls forbidden fruit for a poor girl like you. You know the blind beggar’s daughter at Bednal Green, as you correctly pronounced it, did not marry another beggar.’

“‘La! papa, how mercenary you are!’ laughed Amy. Hetty blushed prettily and turned the conversation, and Mr. Godfrey Fielding dropped out of record for that night at least.

“But not out of remembrance. Both girls thought of him, and both were very glad when, two days afterwards, he called on Mr. Frazer. He was in orders then; he had attended ordination and had taken his vows. He wore, I am bound to say, a white neckerchief with a huge bow, and in those days had not the M.B. waistcoat with the step-collar, which even the lowest Evangelical now assumes. He looked very well, very handsome, and was altogether as fresh-coloured, honest, unassuming a young parson as one could look on. There are parsons and parsons; and an authoress, now, alas! dead, has touched with a fine scorn upon some of the failings of our curates; but believe me, there are some good

fellows, not far from angels, among them—men who do their duty as bravely as any soldier who goes to meet his death or win his glory and promotion. The Rev. Mr. Fielding was, above all, manly. Shrewd, observant, well read, and full of knowledge, he never failed to please his acquaintance, and could, no doubt, have risen in the Church, had he chosen to think about a rich benefice instead of his duty.

“Being manly, it is no wonder that both these young women liked him, and that he grew very intimate with Mr. Frazer. Months passed away, and Amy had once or twice to scold her friend and adviser, and Mr. Frazer had to tap his soft and delicate nails more than once, as he heard from his daughter of the refusals of good offers which Miss Armstrong had perpetrated—offers, too, which in more than one instance brought dignity and rank with them, emanating, as Amy said, from the ‘Trefoil lot.’

“At last Miss Amy, who was growing a little more impatient than she needed, went a visit in the country, leaving her dear friend and adopted sister at home. Miss Armstrong, who had her opinions about the matter, and who was justly indignant because the young fellows would prefer

making love to her rather than to her good friend Amy, made some exception in favour of the Reverend Godfrey Fielding, who came just as constantly to the house now that Amy was away as when she was present, and who, knowing Miss Armstrong's riches as well as benevolence, seldom came without some sad story, which touched her heart, and at the same time lightened her purse.

“At length, one day when Amy was expected home, and when these visits had become very dear to Miss Henrietta Armstrong, the young clergyman left Mr. Frazer at dinner descanting on the excellence of port wine, and joined Miss Armstrong in the drawing-room. As in those days the gentlemen were expected to give the ladies at least three hours to prepare the coffee, Miss Hetty might be excused for her look of gratified surprise, although she well knew that the young curate seldom exceeded one modest glass, and that Mr. Frazer, from whom she cunningly extracted all this knowledge, rather despised him as one who did not or could not take his bottle.

“‘Well, Sir,’ said Hetty, looking up into his good face as a sister might, ‘you have made an early appearance. I suppose you have some sad story to relate.’

“ ‘Indeed I have,’ returned Godfrey, taking a chair and carrying it to the side of Hetty’s sofa ; ‘but I don’t know how to commence.’

“ ‘Indeed !’ said the lady, with a pretty impudence, putting her white hand in her pocket to feel for her purse ; ‘you are generally very fluent on other people’s woes, Mr. Fielding.’

“ ‘But, alas !’ said the curate, ‘this woe is my own.’

“ Hetty blushed slightly and smiled, as if she knew a cure.

“ He continued : ‘I have come to be your suitor.’

“ The smile faded from Hetty’s cheek ; the pretty lips were parted, the breath came and went ; she dared not turn her eyes upon him when he paused. He rose from his chair and walked a step backwards, then forwards.

“ ‘Pray go on, Sir,’ she said at last.

“ ‘Oh ! if you can—you who are so rich, so good, so pitiful, and kind—if you can aid one who does not know how to speak, who dares not approach one whom he loves’——

“ ‘This is pretty well,’ thought strong-minded Hetty ; ‘but, oh ! these men ; we women never quite understand them.’

“ ‘—— who has for many, many a day come



here purposely to speak, but yet found his speech die away upon his lips; oh! if you will let your heart speak for him—plead for him—he will bless you all his life.’ In his energy the young clergyman had knelt on one knee to her, and now lifted up his eyes and looked pleadingly in her face.

“‘Godfrey,’ she said, quietly, but not calmly, putting out her hand.

“‘Yes, call me Godfrey; you give me hopes.’ He rose as he said this, and Miss Hetty rose too. He placed one arm around her. ‘Call me Godfrey, and plead for me as a sister would for a brother. I love, I dearly love your friend Amy—Miss Frazer.’

“He knelt again as he said this, and Miss Hetty sank suddenly on the sofa. He was too much agitated to notice her sudden pallor and distress, and, having once got through his difficulty, he proceeded quietly enough. ‘In the presence of the woman I love,’ he said, ‘I am a mere fool. I dare not speak nor write to her; but at last I have determined to do so. Here is the letter; it is open. Read it, and then aid me if you can.’

“Miss Armstrong rose hastily. ‘Yes,’ she said. ‘Yes, Mr. Fielding, I will do as you wish. Give me the letter, and then go. *Her father*’—she laid

a pretty strong accent on the pronoun—‘ will miss you.’ As Mr. Godfrey was himself very much agitated, he rose hastily, and, thanking his protectress very humbly, joined Mr. Frazer at the port, when he astonished that worthy gentleman by finishing a decanter which was half full, and which the good man had reserved for himself. ‘ By Jove!’ said he to himself, in wonder, ‘ by Jove! Why, when he is a rector, he will drink like a fish.’ Having astonished his friend in this way, Mr. Fielding hastily departed, fearing to face the lady in the drawing-room, and feigning a call of duty, which indeed he set himself, and faithfully kept.”

END OF VOL. I.







